RaLΩGrad

4

SHONEN JUMP ADVANCED

Story by TSUNEO TAKANO

Art by TAKESHI OBATA

PARENTAL ADVISORY
MATURE
CONTENT

小畑　健

Takeshi Obata

When I look upon all my research books about ancient civilizations, I find myself wishing I could go visit them. Without even realizing it, I've been caught in a daydream. It's a real problem...

♌

Tsuneo Takano

Born in Tokyo.
No hobbies.
No expression.
No interests.
No harm.
Nothing to say.

Takeshi Obata was born in 1969 in Niigata, Japan, and is the artist of the wildly popular SHONEN JUMP title *Hikaru no Go,* which won the 2003 Tezuka Shinsei "New Hope" award and the Shogakukan Manga award. Obata is also the artist of *Arabian Majin Bokentan Lamp Lamp, Ayatsuri Sakon, Cyborg Jichan G,* and the smash hit manga *Death Note.*

RalΩGrad

Vol. 4

The SHONEN JUMP ADVANCED
Manga Edition

Story By **TSUNEO TAKANO**
Art By **TAKESHI OBATA**

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RATED
T+
FOR OLDER TEEN

PARENTAL ADVISORY
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SHONEN JUMP ADVANCED
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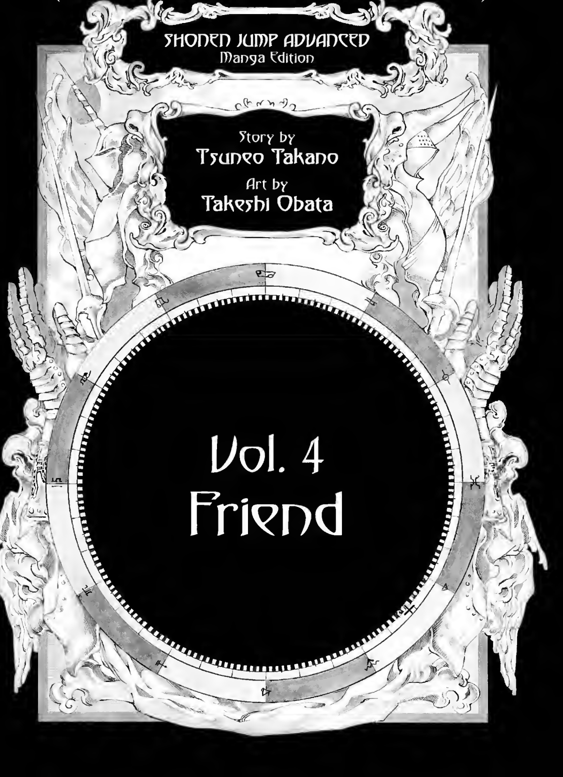

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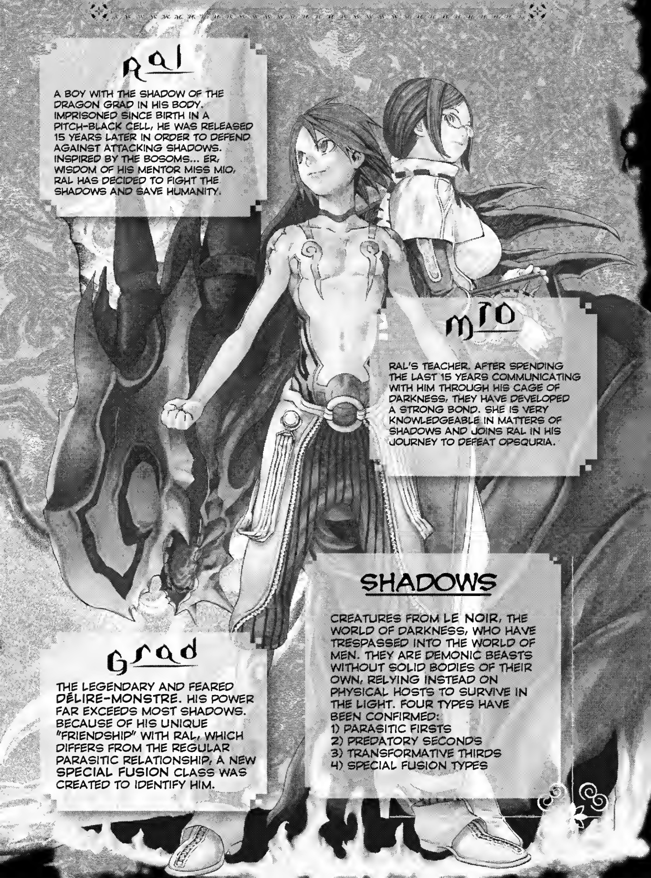
Vol. 4
Friend

Story&Characters



Ral

A BOY WITH THE SHADOW OF THE DRAGON GRAD IN HIS BODY. IMPRISONED SINCE BIRTH IN A PITCH-BLACK CELL, HE WAS RELEASED 15 YEARS LATER IN ORDER TO DEFEND AGAINST ATTACKING SHADOWS. INSPIRED BY THE BOSOMS... ER, WISDOM OF HIS MENTOR MISS MIO, RAL HAS DECIDED TO FIGHT THE SHADOWS AND SAVE HUMANITY.

Mio

RAL'S TEACHER. AFTER SPENDING THE LAST 15 YEARS COMMUNICATING WITH HIM THROUGH HIS CAGE OF DARKNESS, THEY HAVE DEVELOPED A STRONG BOND. SHE IS VERY KNOWLEDGEABLE IN MATTERS OF SHADOWS AND JOINS RAL IN HIS JOURNEY TO DEFEAT OPSQURIA.

SHADOWS

CREATURES FROM LE NOIR, THE WORLD OF DARKNESS, WHO HAVE TRESPASSED INTO THE WORLD OF MEN. THEY ARE DEMONIC BEASTS WITHOUT SOLID BODIES OF THEIR OWN, RELYING INSTEAD ON PHYSICAL HOSTS TO SURVIVE IN THE LIGHT. FOUR TYPES HAVE BEEN CONFIRMED:

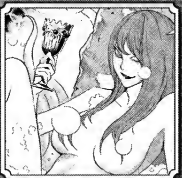
1) PARASITIC FIRSTS
2) PREDATORY SECONDS
3) TRANSFORMATIVE THIRDS
4) SPECIAL FUSION TYPES

Grad

THE LEGENDARY AND FEARED **DÉLIRE-MONSTRE**. HIS POWER FAR EXCEEDS MOST SHADOWS. BECAUSE OF HIS UNIQUE "FRIENDSHIP" WITH RAL, WHICH DIFFERS FROM THE REGULAR PARASITIC RELATIONSHIP, A NEW **SPECIAL FUSION** CLASS WAS CREATED TO IDENTIFY HIM.

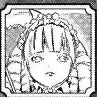
STORY THUS FAR...

RAL SET OUT TO SLAY OPSQURIA, THE QUEEN OF SHADOWS, FOR NOBLE REASONS (WELL, *MOSTLY* NOBLE), BUT WHEN HE LEARNED THAT THE "INVINCIBLE SWORDSMAN" GANETTE WAS ALSO ON THE HUNT, IT BECAME A MATTER OF PRIDE! AFTER DEFEATING GANETTE IN A DUEL, RAL ENLISTS HIS FORMER RIVAL TO LIBERATE THE HUMANS WHO WERE ENSLAVED BY OPSQURIA—INCLUDING SUNSU'S SISTER. THE MEN PROVED EASY ENOUGH TO RESCUE, BUT THE WOMEN ARE ANOTHER STORY, FOR THEIR CAPTOR HAS FUSED WITH THE ALL-POWERFUL RED PHOENIX!



Opsquria

THE QUEEN OF THE SHADOWS. VAIN BEYOND MEASURE, SHE CHOOSES ONLY BEAUTIFUL GIRLS AS HER HOSTS, FEEDING OFF THEIR LIFE ENERGY UNTIL SHE TIRES OF HER LOOKS AND FINDS AN EVEN MORE BEAUTIFUL HOST. HER DESIRES LED HER AND THE SHADOWS FROM LE NOIR INTO THE HUMAN REALM. SHE IS CALLED "LADY BIRA" BY HER KIND.

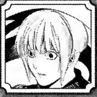


Sasa

THE HOST OF THE RED PHOENIX. THIS COLD-HEARTED GIRL SIDED WITH OPSQURIA.

Collie

ONE OF THE FIVE SPECIAL FUSION TYPES.

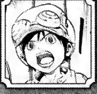


Kafka

THE BRAVE KNIGHT KNOWN AS "KAFKA OF THE CHAIN OF ROSES."

Riz

KAFKA'S SHADOW. THE CHAÎNE LORD, IT IS PARTICULARLY WELL SUITED FOR DEFENSE.

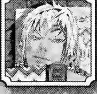


Sunsu

A BOY WHO TOOK IN A SHADOW TO JOIN RAL'S QUEST, WITH THE HOPES OF RESCUING HIS SISTER.

Gensai

SUNSU'S SHADOW. IT ALLOWS ITS HOST TO BREATH UNDERWATER.



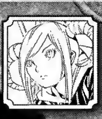
Ganette

THE "INVINCIBLE SWORDSMAN." HE HAD A HEAD START ON RAL ON THE MISSION TO DESTROY OPSQURIA, BUT THEY HAVE NOW JOINED FORCES.

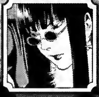
Garla

THE LEGENDARY WHITE TIGER. IN ITS SEARCH FOR A COURAGEOUS HOST, IT CHOSE GANETTE.

Senol



Cela



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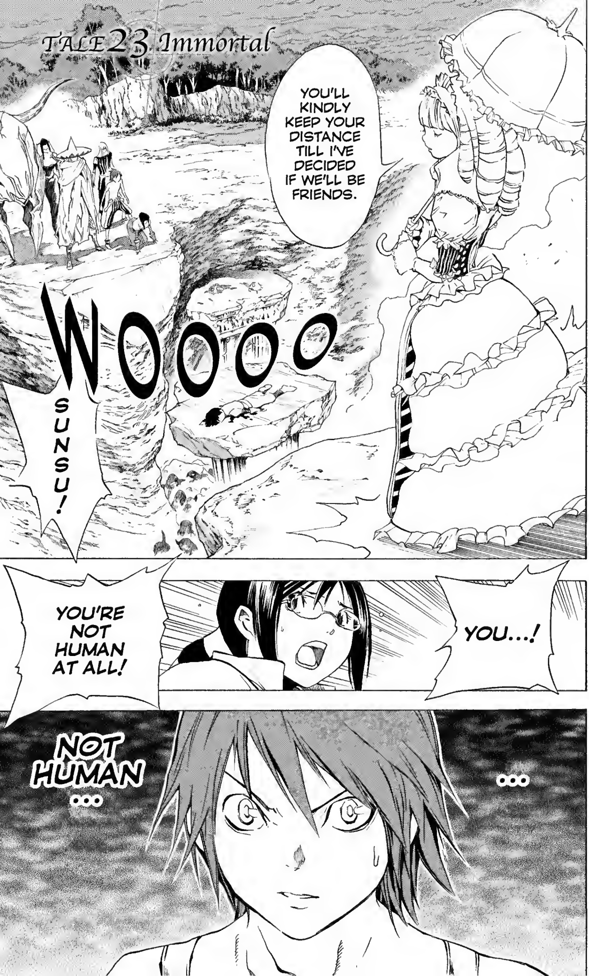
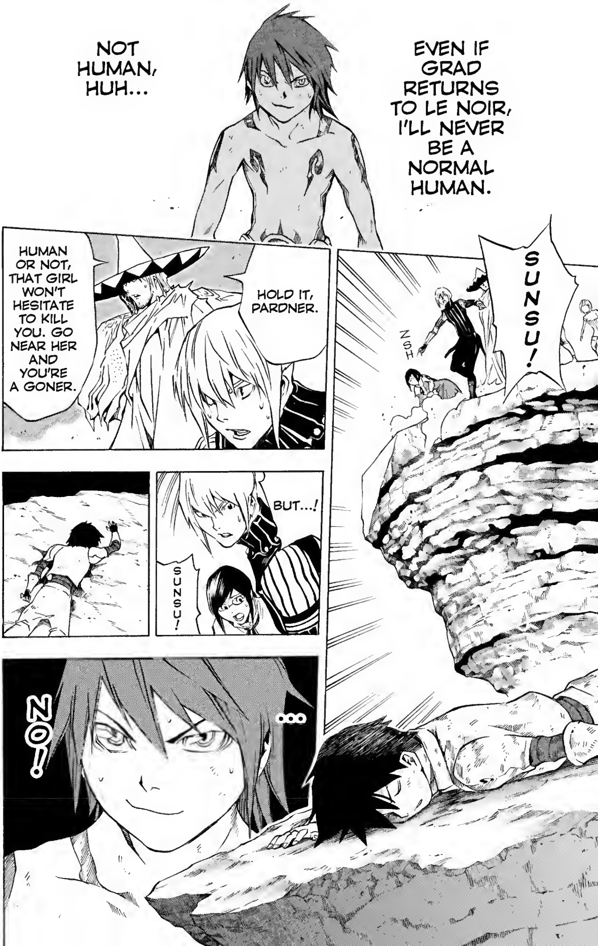
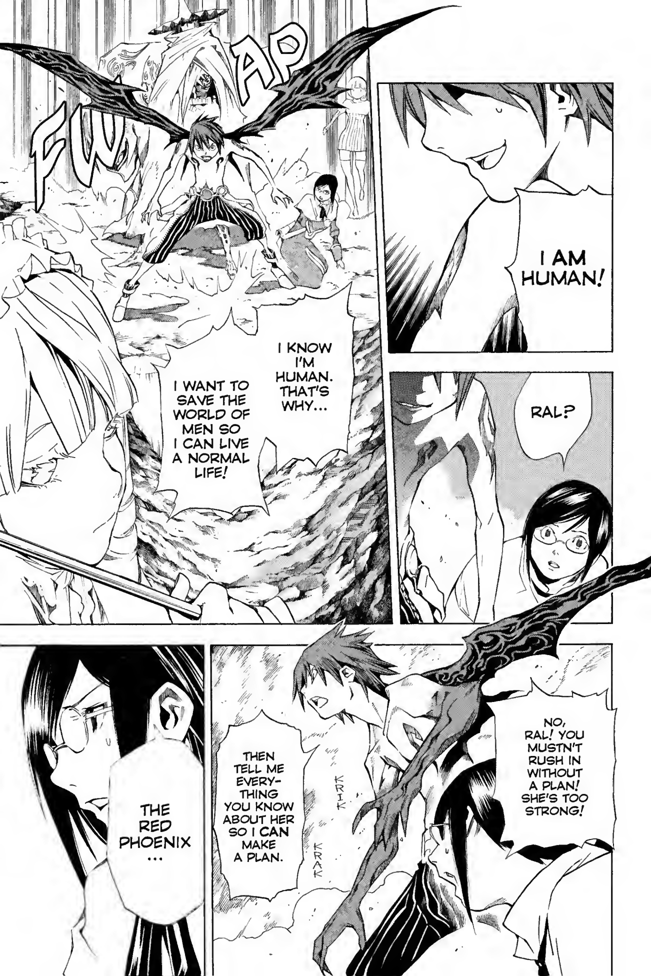
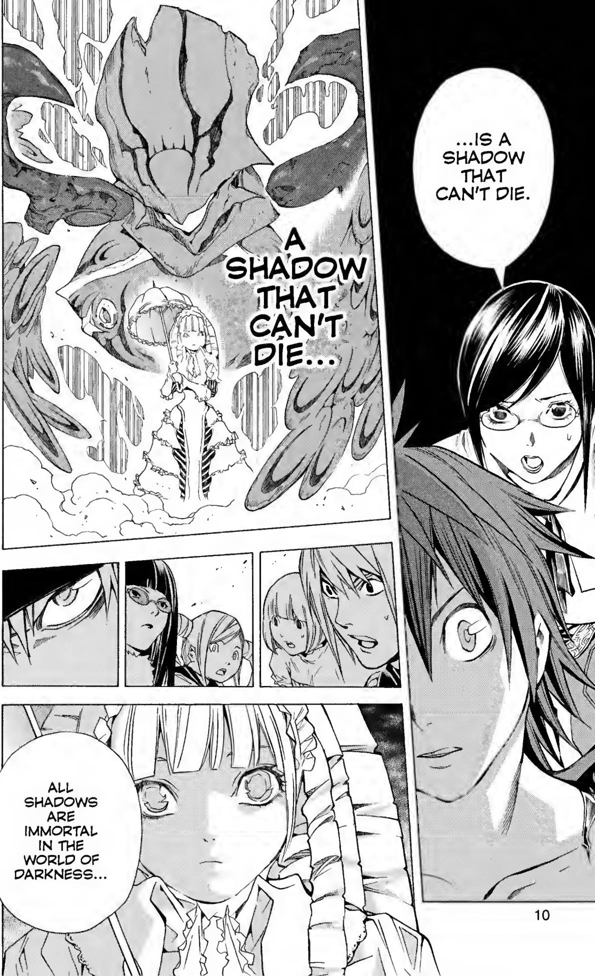
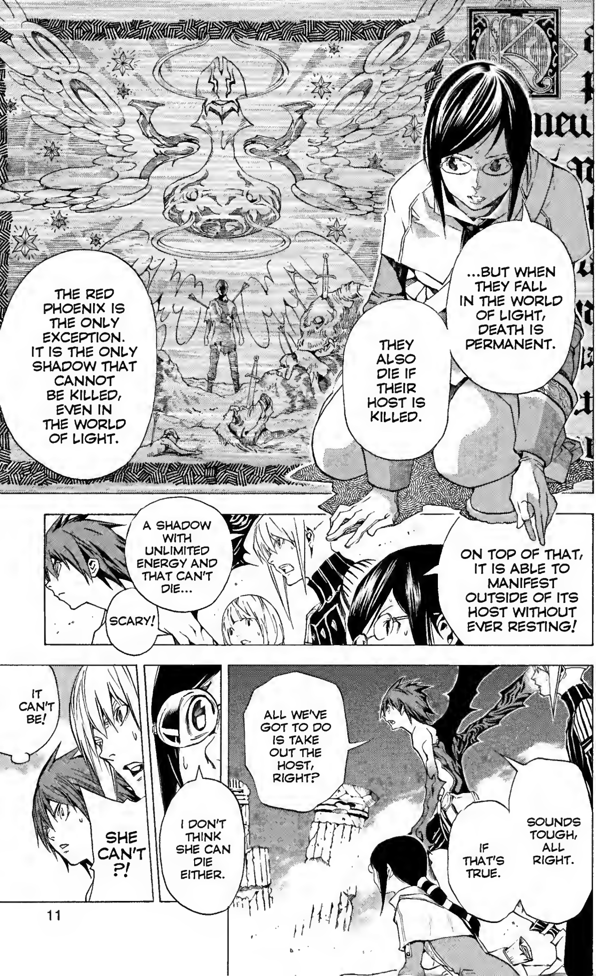
TALE 23 Immortal

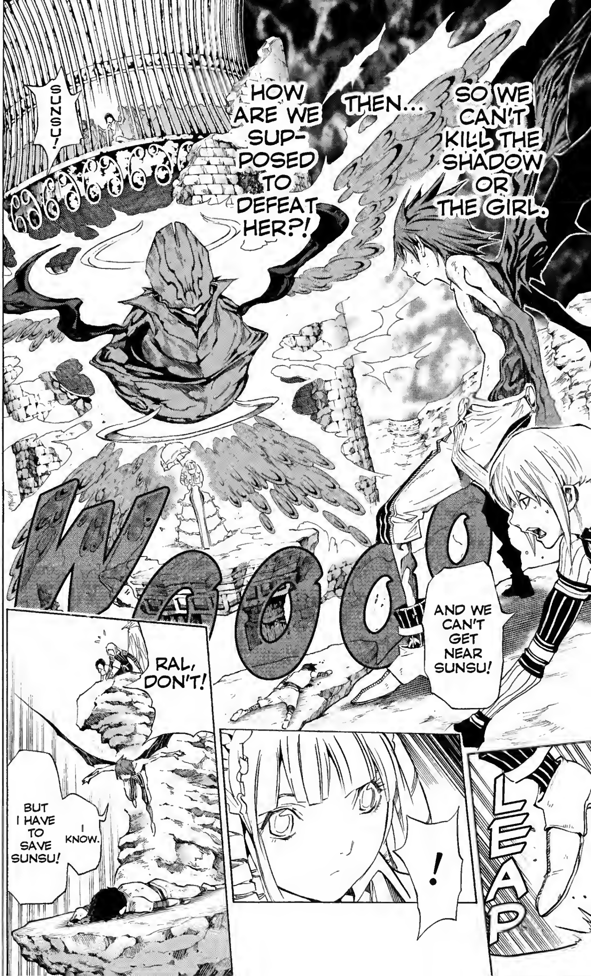

YOU'LL KINDLY KEEP YOUR DISTANCE TILL I'VE DECIDED IF WE'LL BE FRIENDS.
WOOOO
SUNSU!
YOU...!
YOU'RE NOT HUMAN AT ALL!
...
NOT HUMAN ...


EVEN IF GRAD RETURNS TO LE NOIR, I'LL NEVER BE A NORMAL HUMAN.
NOT HUMAN, HUH...
SUNSU!
ZSH
HOLD IT, PARDNER.
HUMAN OR NOT, THAT GIRL WON'T HESITATE TO KILL YOU. GO NEAR HER AND YOU'RE A GONER.
BUT...!
SUNSU!
...
NO!

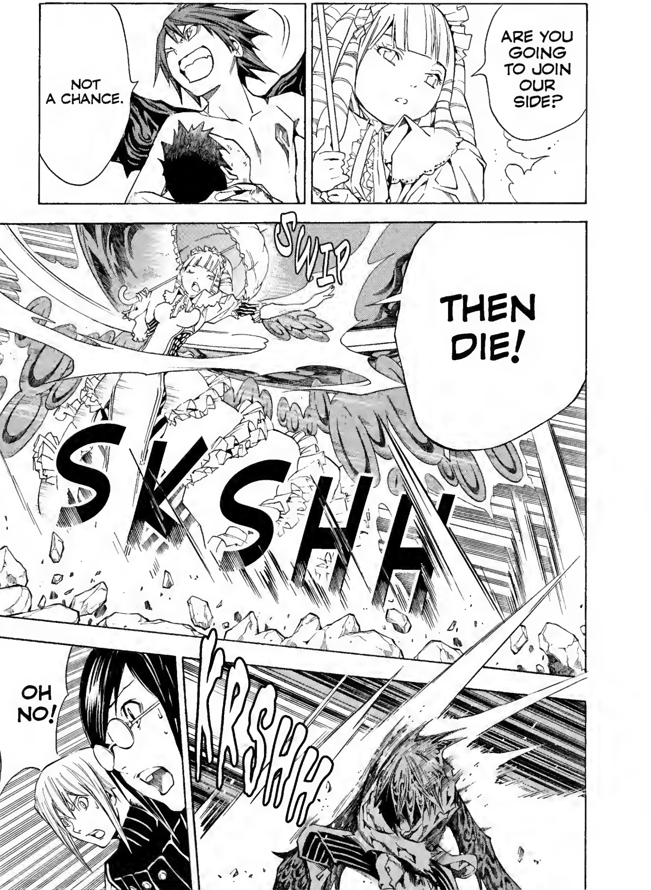

I AM HUMAN!
FWAP
I KNOW I'M HUMAN. THAT'S WHY...
I WANT TO SAVE THE WORLD OF MEN SO I CAN LIVE A NORMAL LIFE!
RAL?
NO, RAL! YOU MUSTN'T RUSH IN WITHOUT A PLAN! SHE'S TOO STRONG!
KRIK
KRAK
THEN TELL ME EVERYTHING YOU KNOW ABOUT HER SO I CAN MAKE A PLAN.
THE RED PHOENIX ...

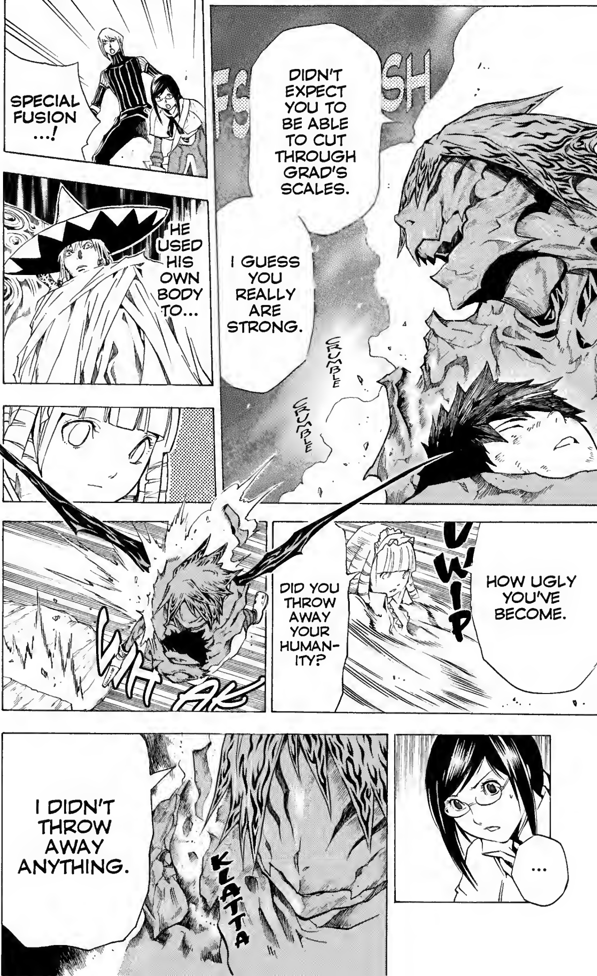

...IS A SHADOW THAT CAN'T DIE.
A SHADOW THAT CAN'T DIE...
ALL SHADOWS ARE IMMORTAL IN THE WORLD OF DARKNESS...

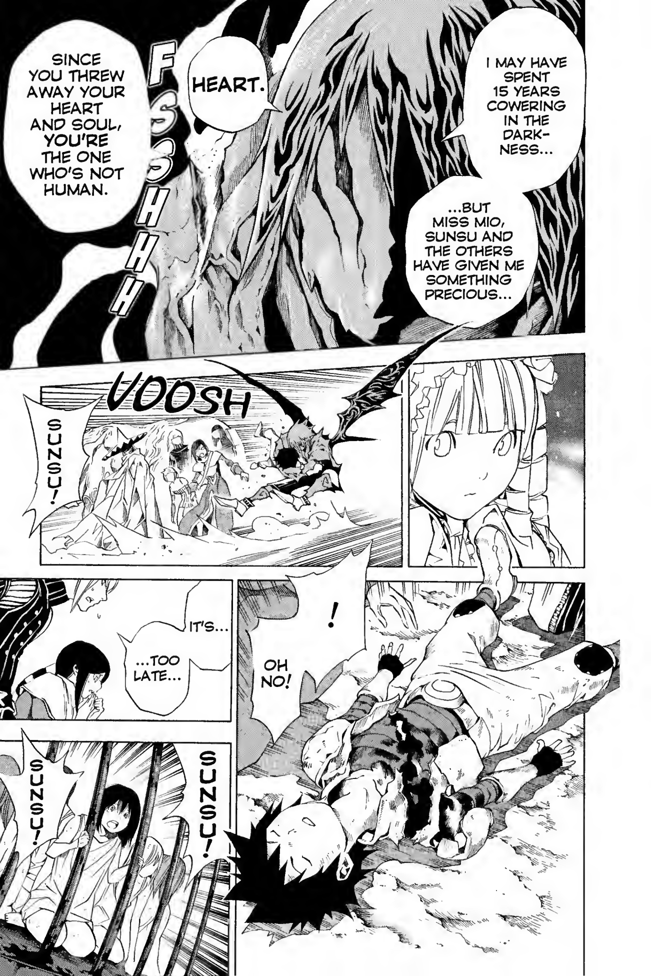

...BUT WHEN THEY FALL IN THE WORLD OF LIGHT, DEATH IS PERMANENT.
THEY ALSO DIE IF THEIR HOST IS KILLED.
THE RED PHOENIX IS THE ONLY EXCEPTION. IT IS THE ONLY SHADOW THAT CANNOT BE KILLED, EVEN IN THE WORLD OF LIGHT.
ON TOP OF THAT, IT IS ABLE TO MANIFEST OUTSIDE OF ITS HOST WITHOUT EVER RESTING!
A SHADOW WITH UNLIMITED ENERGY AND THAT CAN'T DIE...
SCARY!
ALL WE'VE GOT TO DO IS TAKE OUT THE HOST, RIGHT?
SOUNDS TOUGH, ALL RIGHT.
IF THAT'S TRUE.
I DON'T THINK SHE CAN DIE EITHER.
IT CAN'T BE!
SHE CAN'T?!

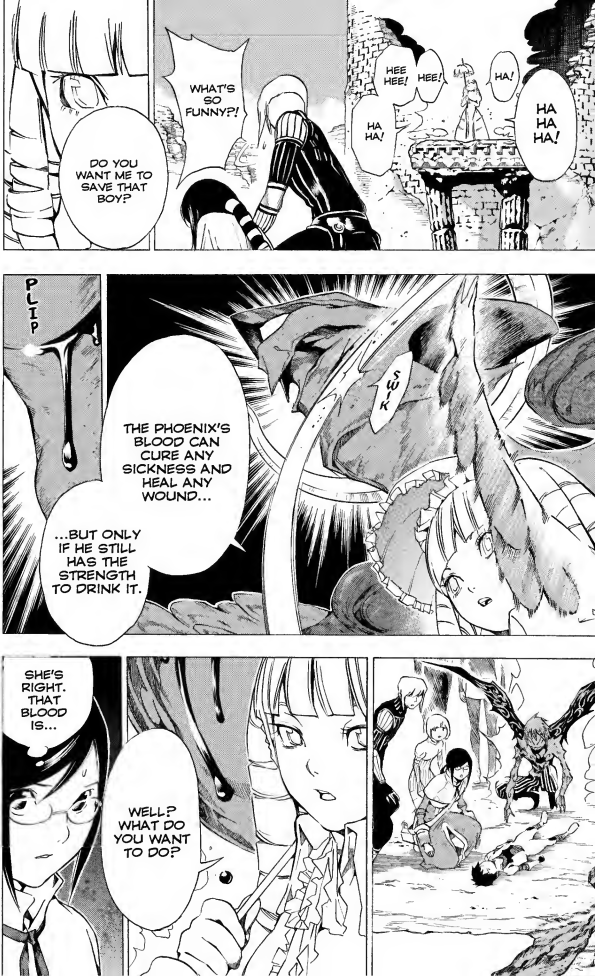

SO WE CAN'T KILL THE SHADOW OR THE GIRL.
THEN...
HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DEFEAT HER?!
SUNSU!
WOOOO
AND WE CAN'T GET NEAR SUNSU!
LEAP
...
!
RAL, DON'T!
I KNOW.
BUT I HAVE TO SAVE SUNSU!

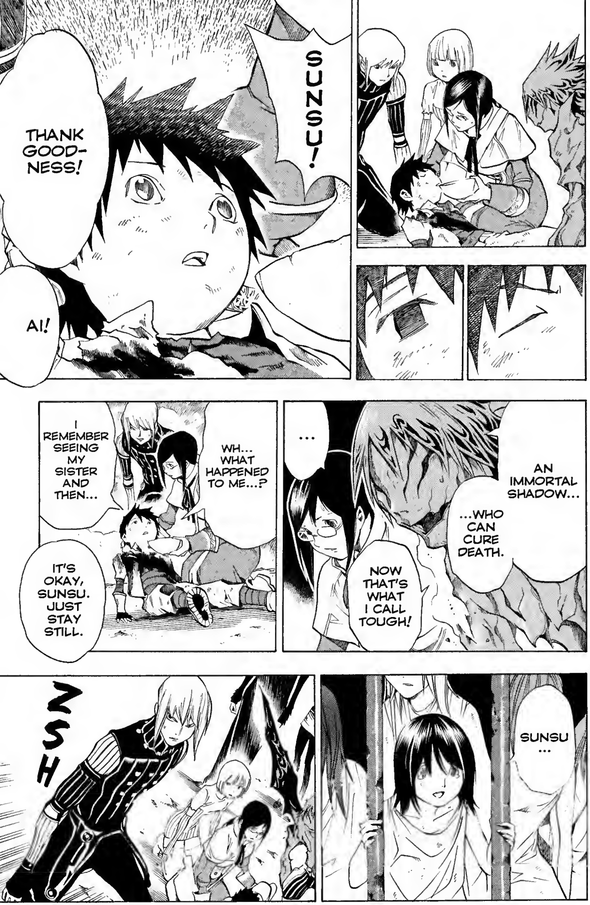
READ THIS WAY

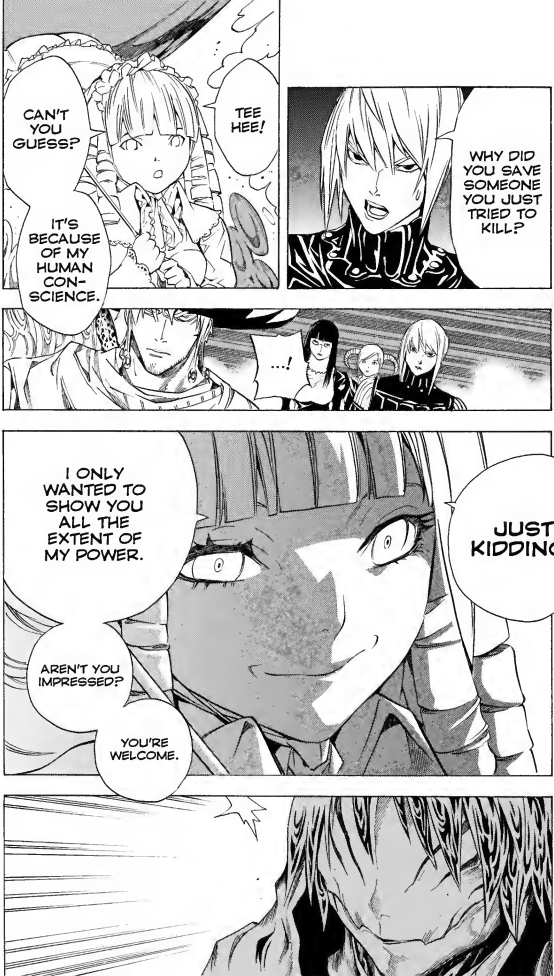

ARE YOU GOING TO JOIN OUR SIDE?
NOT A CHANCE.
SWIP
THEN DIE!
SKSHA
KRSHH
OH NO!

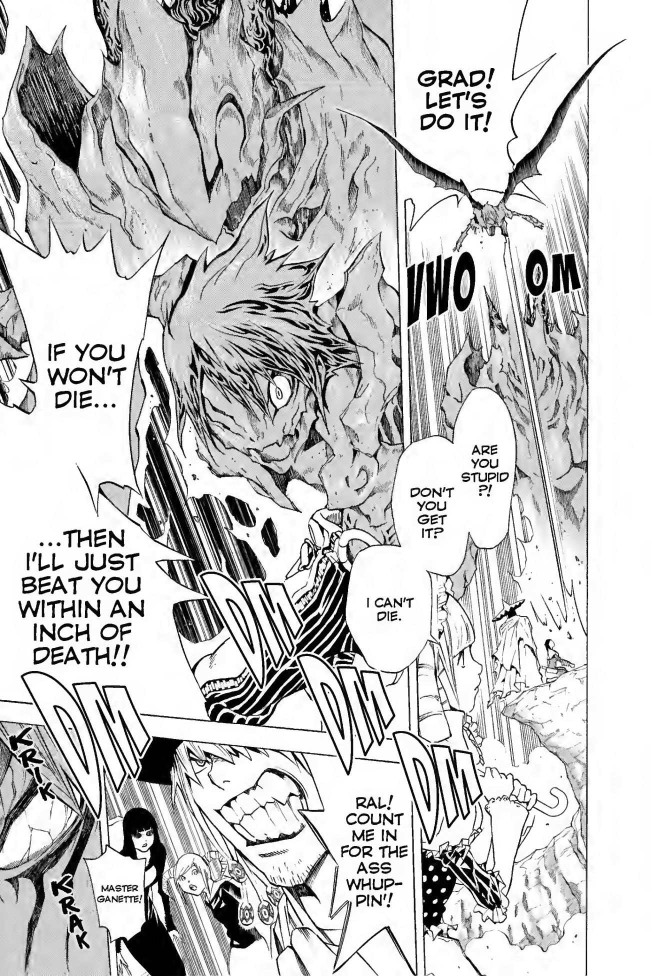

FSSHH
DIDN'T EXPECT YOU TO BE ABLE TO CUT THROUGH GRAD'S SCALES.
I GUESS YOU REALLY ARE STRONG.
CRUMBLE
CRUMBLE
SPECIAL FUSION ...!
HE USED HIS OWN BODY TO...
HOW UGLY YOU'VE BECOME.
WHIP
DID YOU THROW AWAY YOUR HUMANITY?
WHAK
...
I DIDN'T THROW AWAY ANYTHING.
KLATTA

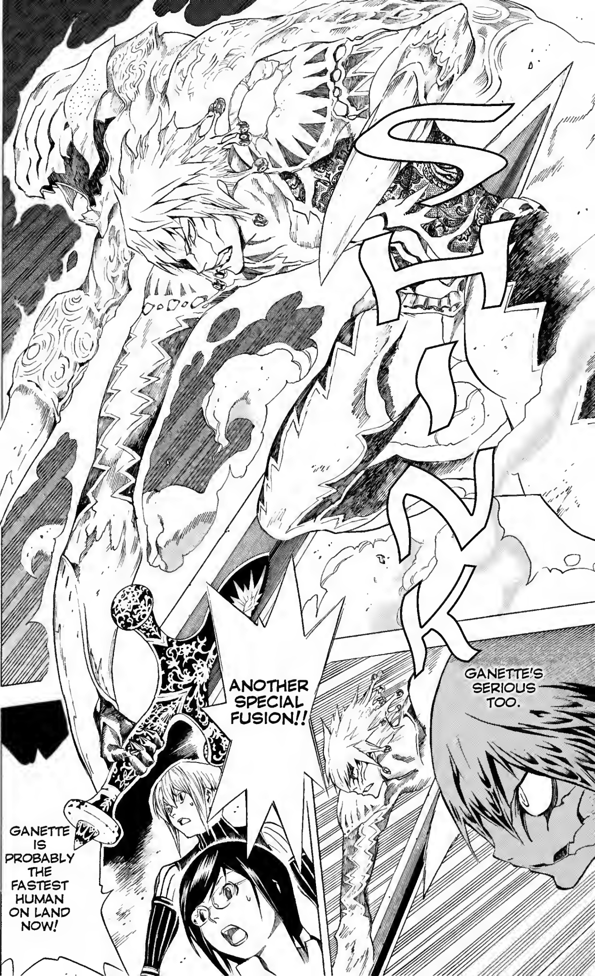

I MAY HAVE SPENT 15 YEARS COWERING IN THE DARKNESS...
...BUT MISS MIO, SUNSU AND THE OTHERS HAVE GIVEN ME SOMETHING PRECIOUS...
HEART.
FSSHHHH
SINCE YOU THREW AWAY YOUR HEART AND SOUL, YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S NOT HUMAN.
VOOSH
SUNSU!
!
OH NO!
IT'S...
...TOO LATE...
SUNSU!
SUNSU!

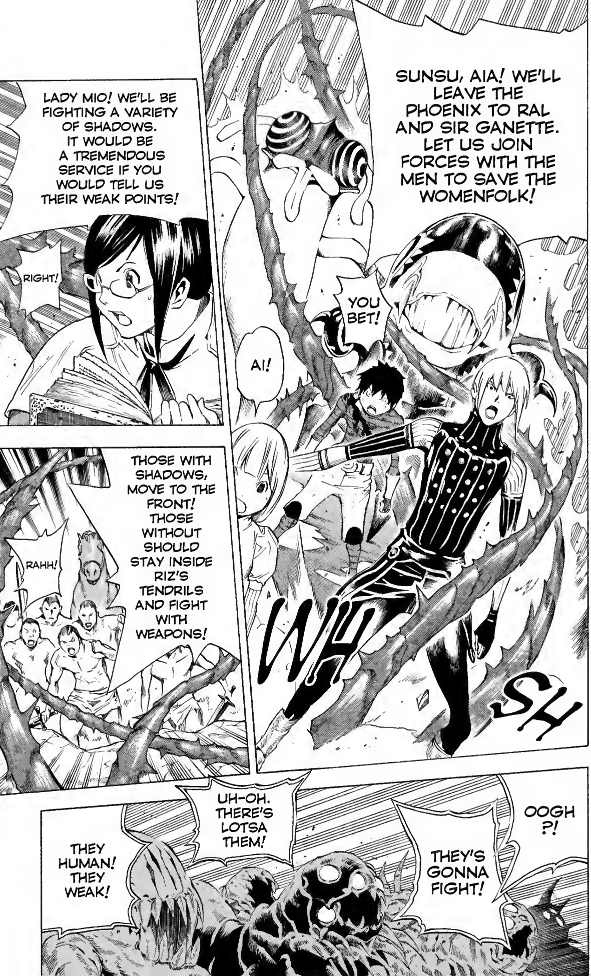

HA HA HA!
HA!
HEE!
HEE HEE!
HA HA!
WHAT'S SO FUNNY?!
DO YOU WANT ME TO SAVE THAT BOY?
SWIK
THE PHOENIX'S BLOOD CAN CURE ANY SICKNESS AND HEAL ANY WOUND...
...BUT ONLY IF HE STILL HAS THE STRENGTH TO DRINK IT.
PLIP
WELL? WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?
SHE'S RIGHT. THAT BLOOD IS...

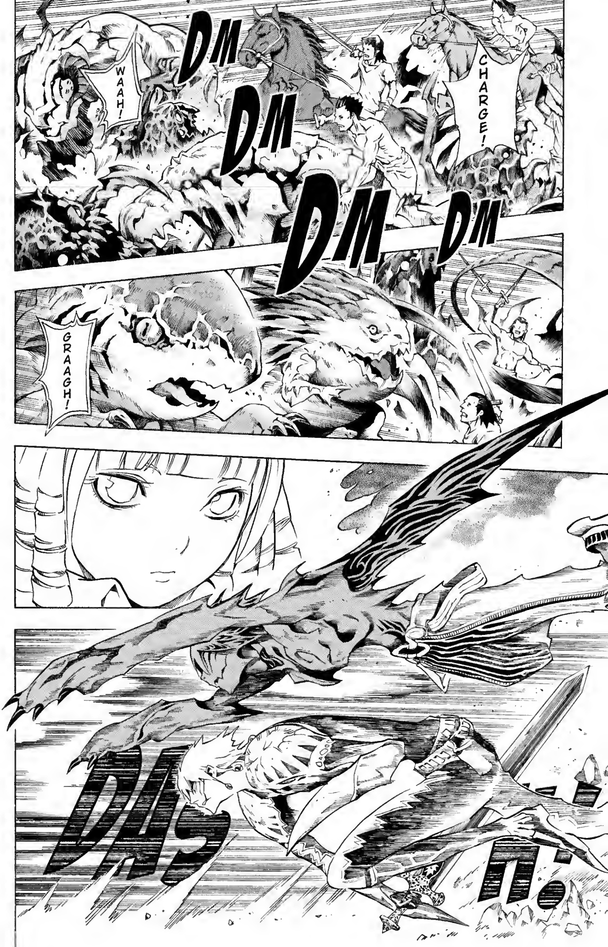

SUNSU!
THANK GOODNESS!
AI!
AN IMMORTAL SHADOW...
...WHO CAN CURE DEATH.
NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL TOUGH!
...
WH... WHAT HAPPENED TO ME...?
I REMEMBER SEEING MY SISTER AND THEN...
IT'S OKAY, SUNSU. JUST STAY STILL.
SUNSU...
ZSH

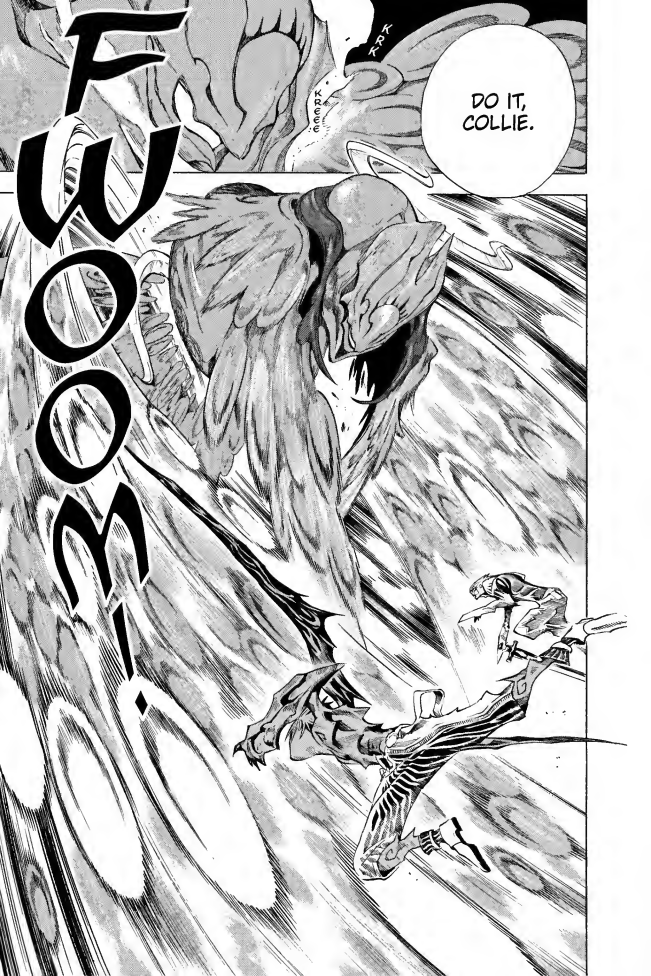

WHY DID YOU SAVE SOMEONE YOU JUST TRIED TO KILL?
TEE HEE!
CAN'T YOU GUESS?
IT'S BECAUSE OF MY HUMAN CONSCIENCE.
...!
JUST KIDDING.
I ONLY WANTED TO SHOW YOU ALL THE EXTENT OF MY POWER.
AREN'T YOU IMPRESSED?
YOU'RE WELCOME.

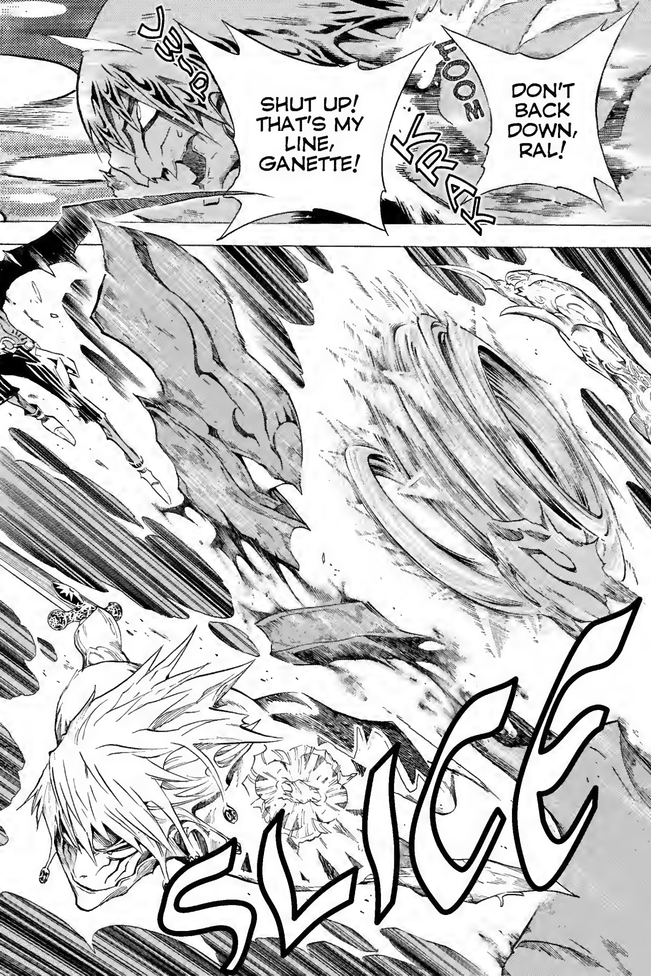

GRAD! LET'S DO IT!
VWOOM
ARE YOU STUPID?!
DON'T YOU GET IT?
I CAN'T DIE.
IF YOU WON'T DIE...
...THEN I'LL JUST BEAT YOU WITHIN AN INCH OF DEATH!!
DM DM DM DM DM
RAL! COUNT ME IN FOR THE ASS WHUPPIN'!
MASTER GANETTE!
KRIK
KRAK

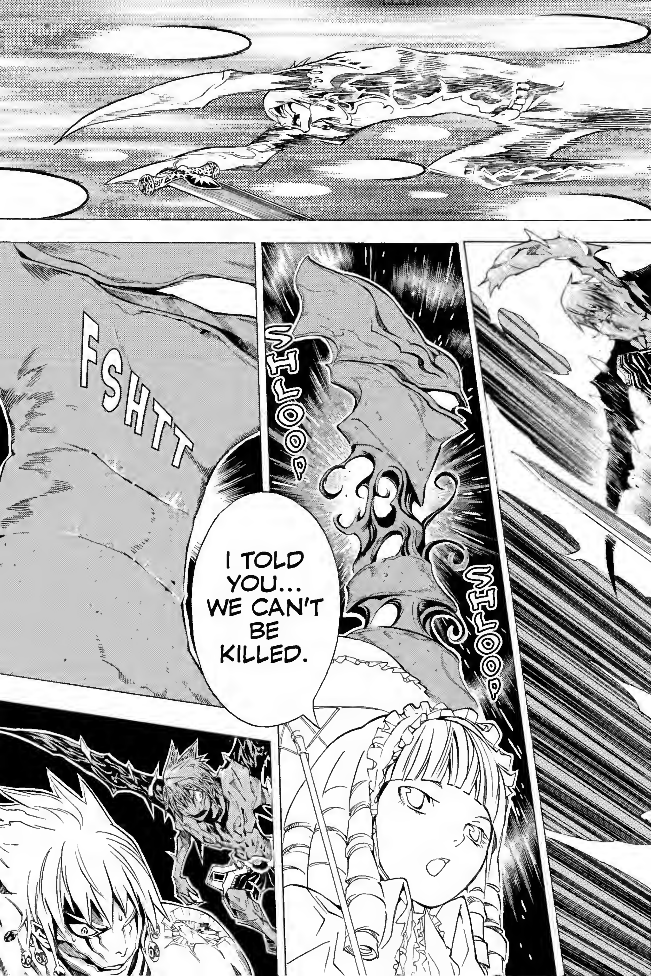

SHINK
GANETTE'S SERIOUS TOO.
ANOTHER SPECIAL FUSION!!
GANETTE IS PROBABLY THE FASTEST HUMAN ON LAND NOW!


SUNSU, AIA! WE'LL LEAVE THE PHOENIX TO RAL AND SIR GANETTE. LET US JOIN FORCES WITH THE MEN TO SAVE THE WOMENFOLK!
YOU BET!
AI!
WH
SH
LADY MIO! WE'LL BE FIGHTING A VARIETY OF SHADOWS. IT WOULD BE A TREMENDOUS SERVICE IF YOU WOULD TELL US THEIR WEAK POINTS!
RIGHT!
THOSE WITH SHADOWS, MOVE TO THE FRONT! THOSE WITHOUT SHOULD STAY INSIDE RIZ'S TENDRILS AND FIGHT WITH WEAPONS!
RAHH!
OOGH ?!
THEY'S GONNA FIGHT!
UH-OH. THERE'S LOTSA THEM!
THEY HUMAN! THEY WEAK!

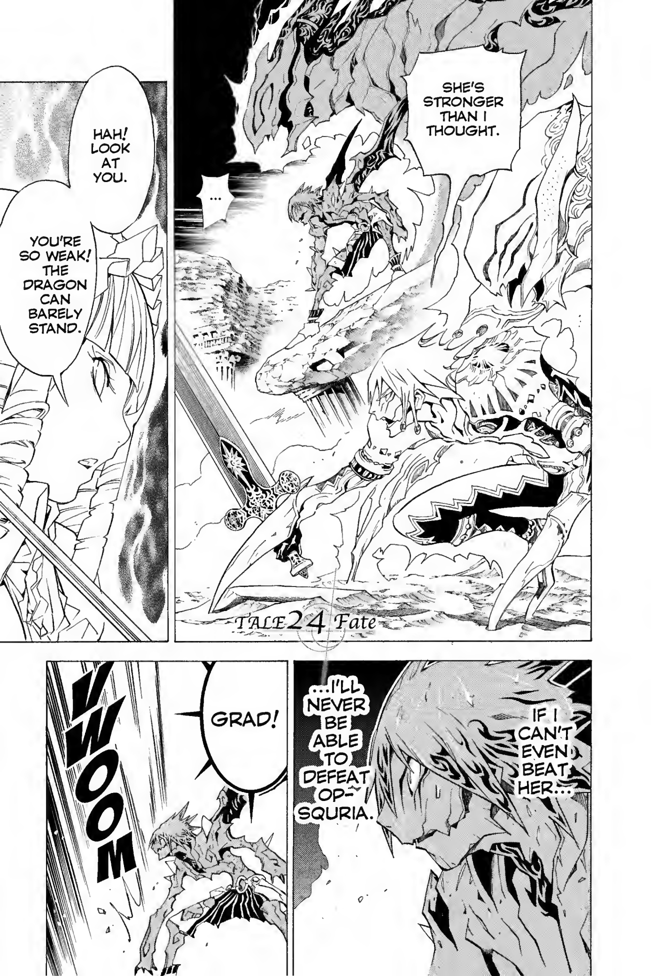

CHARGE!
DM
DM
DM
DM
DM
WAAH!
GRAAGH!
DASH!


DO IT, COLLIE.
KRK
KREEE
FWOOM!!


DON'T BACK DOWN, RAL!
BOOM
KRAK
SHUT UP! THAT'S MY LINE, GANETTE!
SLICE

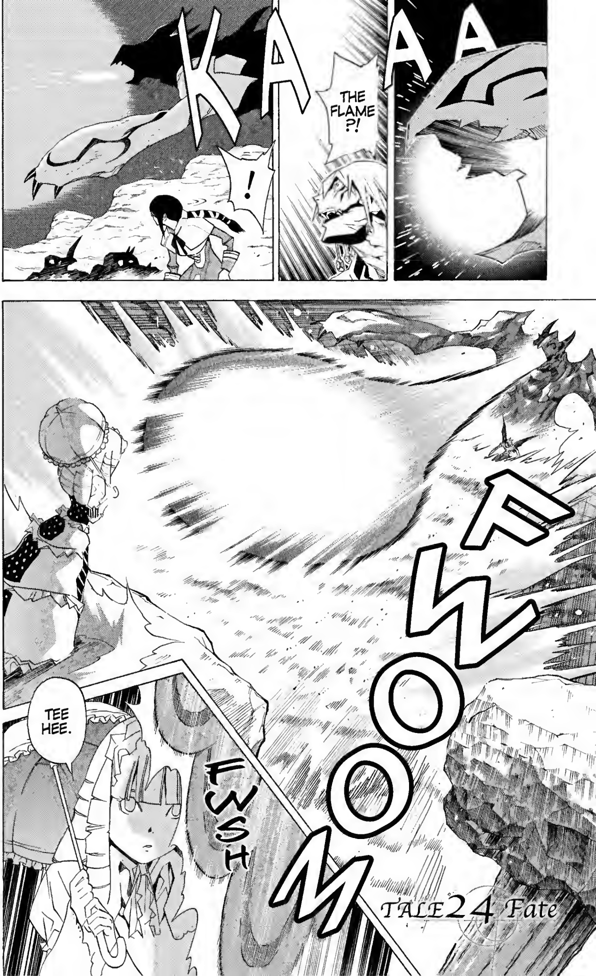

SHLOOP
SHLOOP
FSHTT
I TOLD YOU... WE CAN'T BE KILLED.

RainGrad

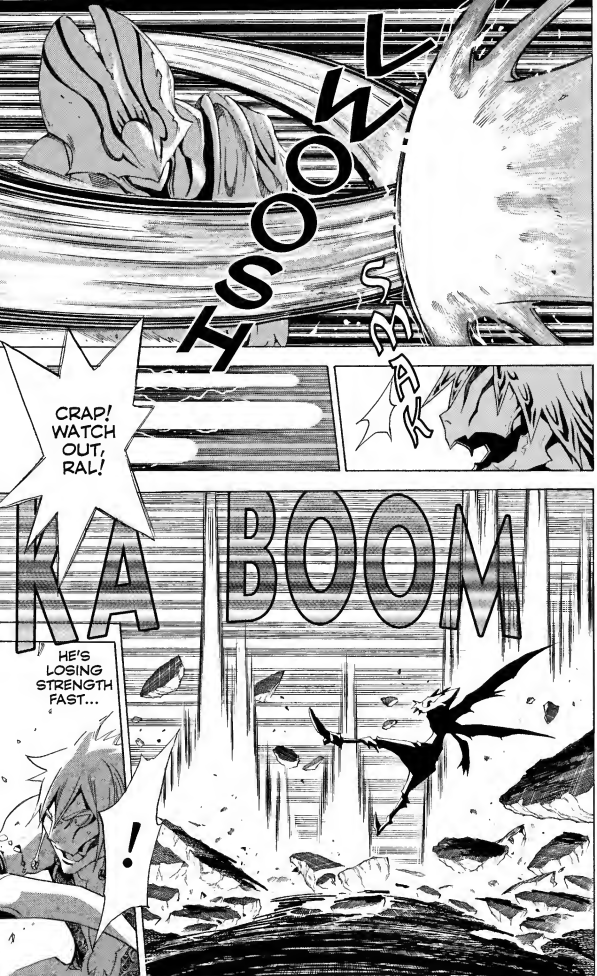


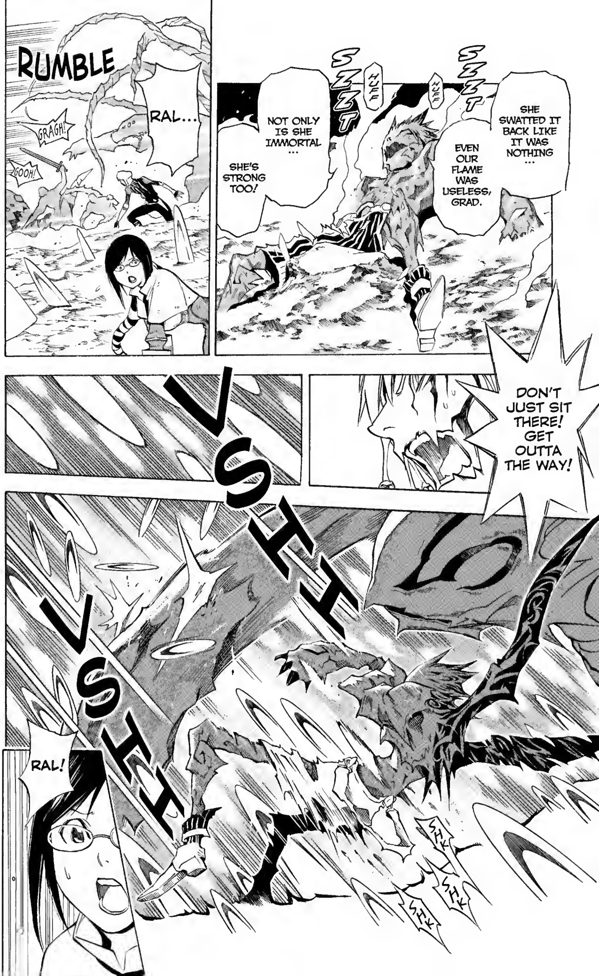
TALE 24 Fate

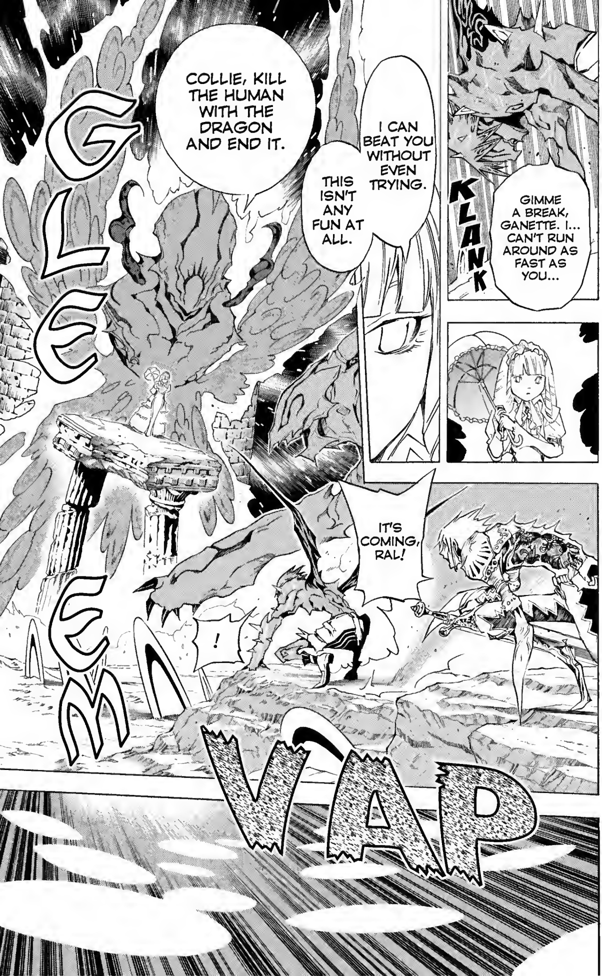
SHE'S STRONGER THAN I THOUGHT.
...
HAH! LOOK AT YOU.
YOU'RE SO WEAK! THE DRAGON CAN BARELY STAND.
IF I CAN'T EVEN BEAT HER...
...I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO DEFEAT OP-SQURIA.
GRAD!
VWOOM

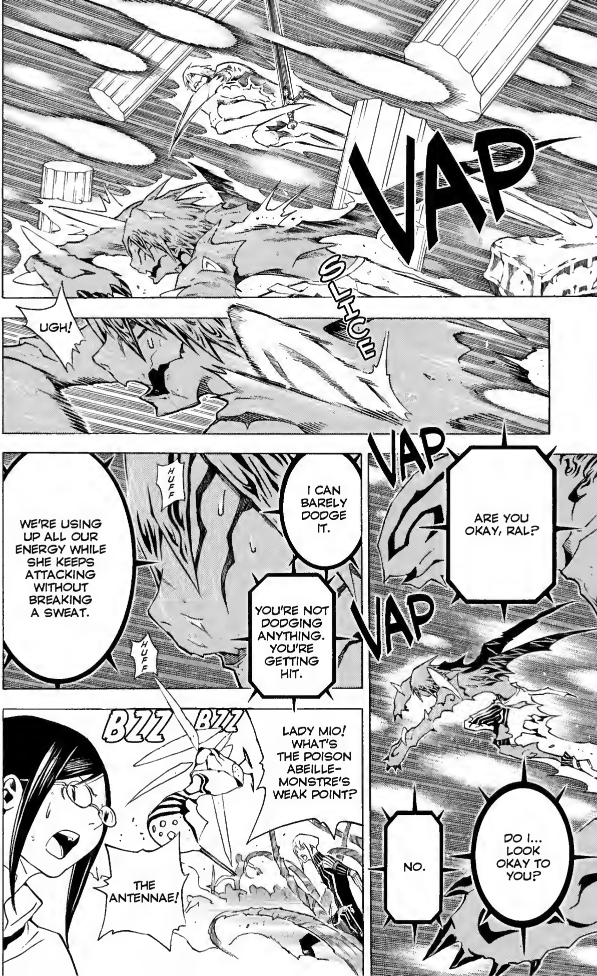

KAAA
THE FLAME ?!
!
FWOOOM
FWSH
TEE HEE.

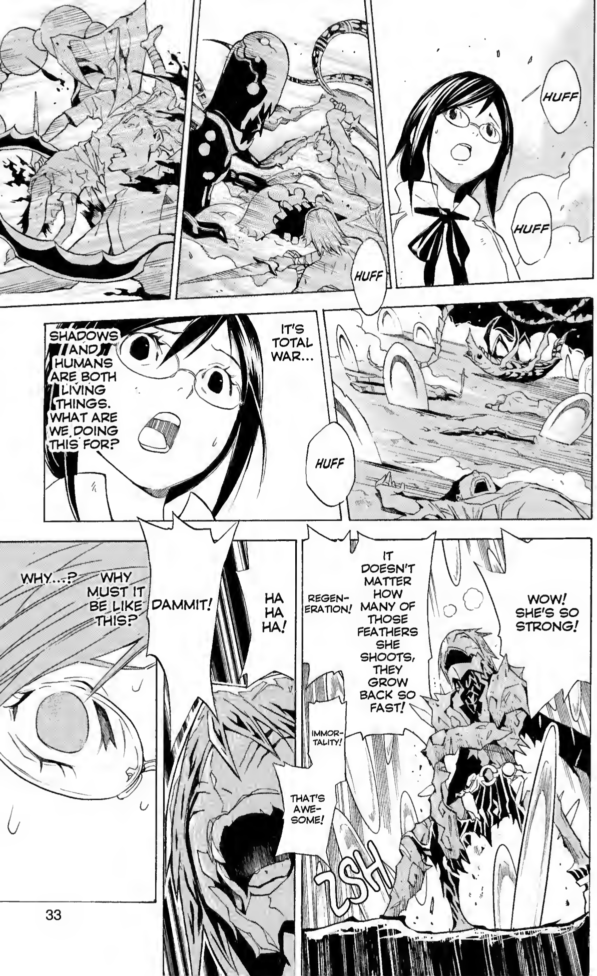
TALE24 Fate

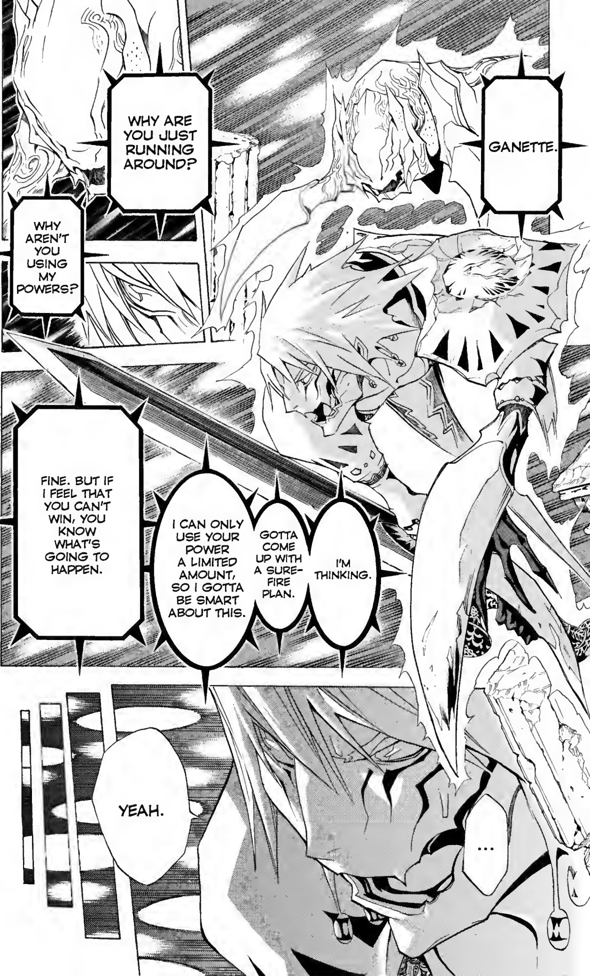

WHOOSH
SMAK
CRAP! WATCH OUT, RAL!
KA BOOM
HE'S LOSING STRENGTH FAST...
!

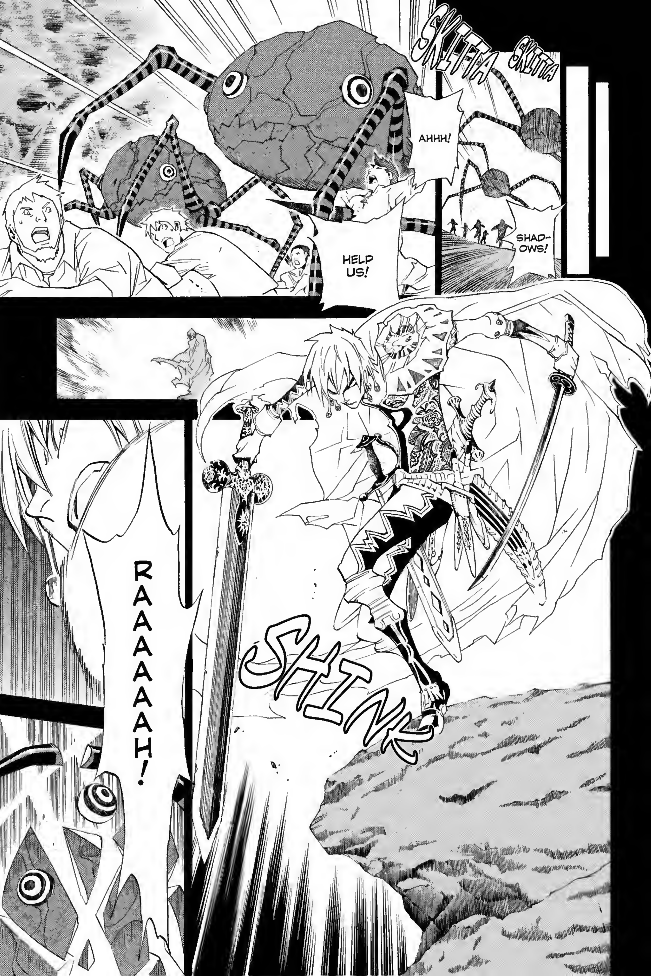

SZZT
HUFF
SZZT
HUFF
SHE SWATTED IT BACK LIKE IT WAS NOTHING ...
EVEN OUR FLAME WAS USELESS, GRAD.
NOT ONLY IS SHE IMMORTAL ...
SHE'S STRONG TOO!
RUMBLE
RAL...
GRAGH!
GOOH!
DON'T JUST SIT THERE! GET OUTTA THE WAY!
VSHH
VSHH
SHK
SHK
SHK
RAL!

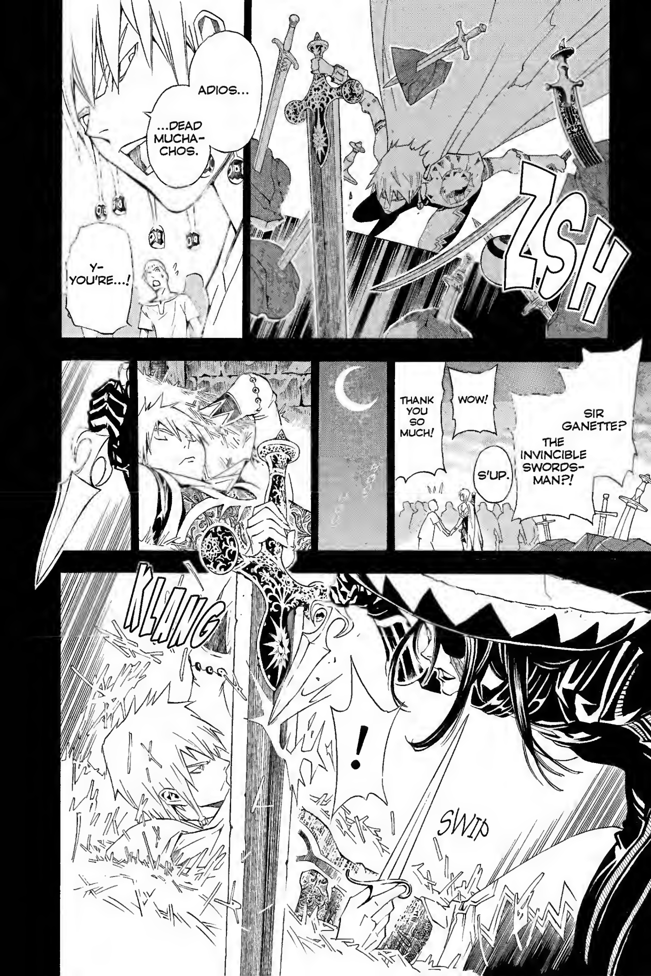

KLANK
GIMME A BREAK, GANETTE. I... CAN'T RUN AROUND AS FAST AS YOU...
I CAN BEAT YOU WITHOUT EVEN TRYING.
THIS ISN'T ANY FUN AT ALL.
COLLIE, KILL THE HUMAN WITH THE DRAGON AND END IT.
GLEEM
IT'S COMING, RAL!
!
VAP

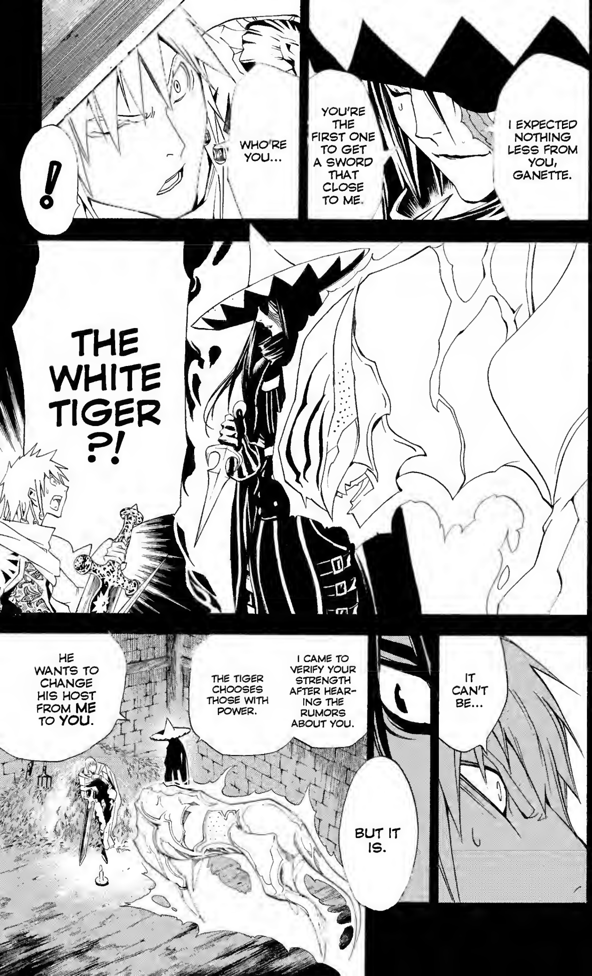

VAP
SLICE
UGH!
VAP
ARE YOU OKAY, RAL?
VAP
I CAN BARELY DODGE IT.
HUFF
WE'RE USING UP ALL OUR ENERGY WHILE SHE KEEPS ATTACKING WITHOUT BREAKING A SWEAT.
YOU'RE NOT DODGING ANYTHING. YOU'RE GETTING HIT.
HUFF
DO I... LOOK OKAY TO YOU?
NO.
LADY MIO! WHAT'S THE POISON ABEILLE-MONSTRE'S WEAK POINT?
BZZ
BZZ
THE ANTENNAE!

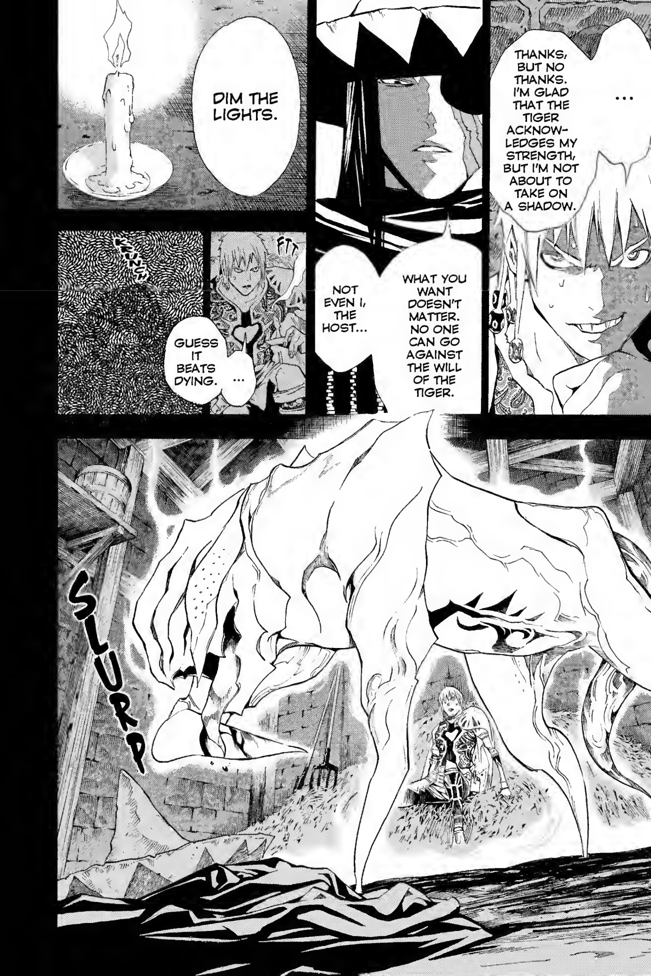

HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
IT'S TOTAL WAR...
SHADOWS AND HUMANS ARE BOTH LIVING THINGS. WHAT ARE WE DOING THIS FOR?
WOW! SHE'S SO STRONG!
IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW MANY OF THOSE FEATHERS SHE SHOOTS, THEY GROW BACK SO FAST!
REGENERATION!
IMMORTALITY!
THAT'S AWESOME!
ZSH
HA HA HA!
DAMMIT!
WHY MUST IT BE LIKE THIS?
WHY...?

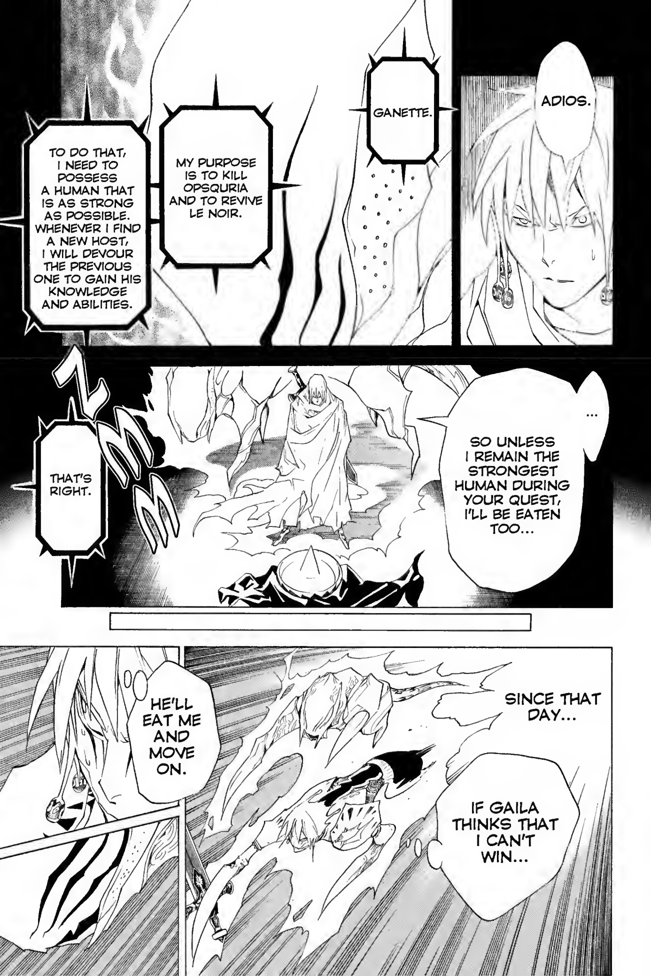

GANETTE.
WHY ARE YOU JUST RUNNING AROUND?
WHY AREN'T YOU USING MY POWERS?
I'M THINKING.
GOTTA COME UP WITH A SURE-FIRE PLAN.
I CAN ONLY USE YOUR POWER A LIMITED AMOUNT, SO I GOTTA BE SMART ABOUT THIS.
FINE. BUT IF I FEEL THAT YOU CAN'T WIN, YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN.
...
YEAH.

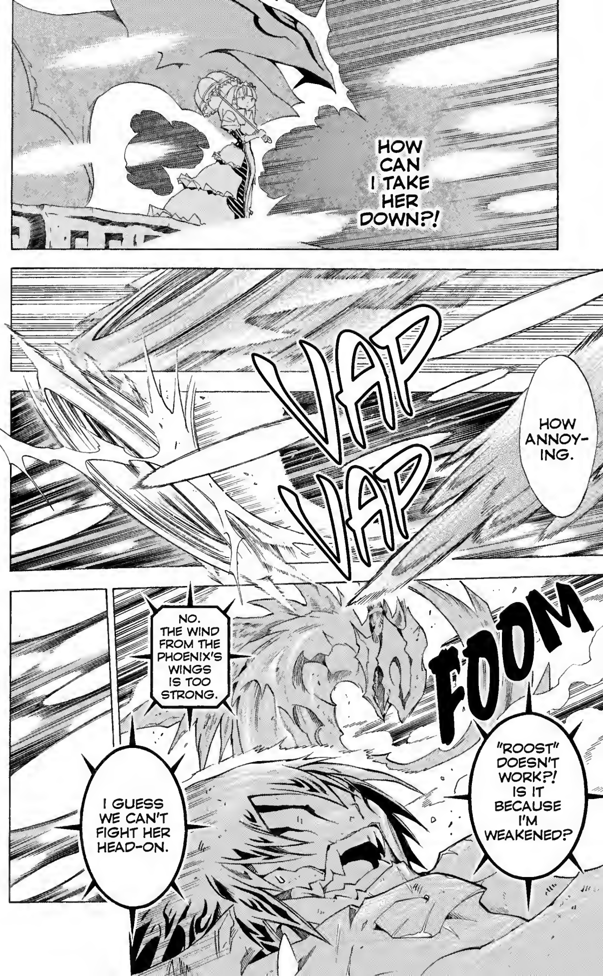

SKITTA
SKITTA
SHAD-OWS!
AHHH!
HELP US!
SHINK
RAAAAAAH!

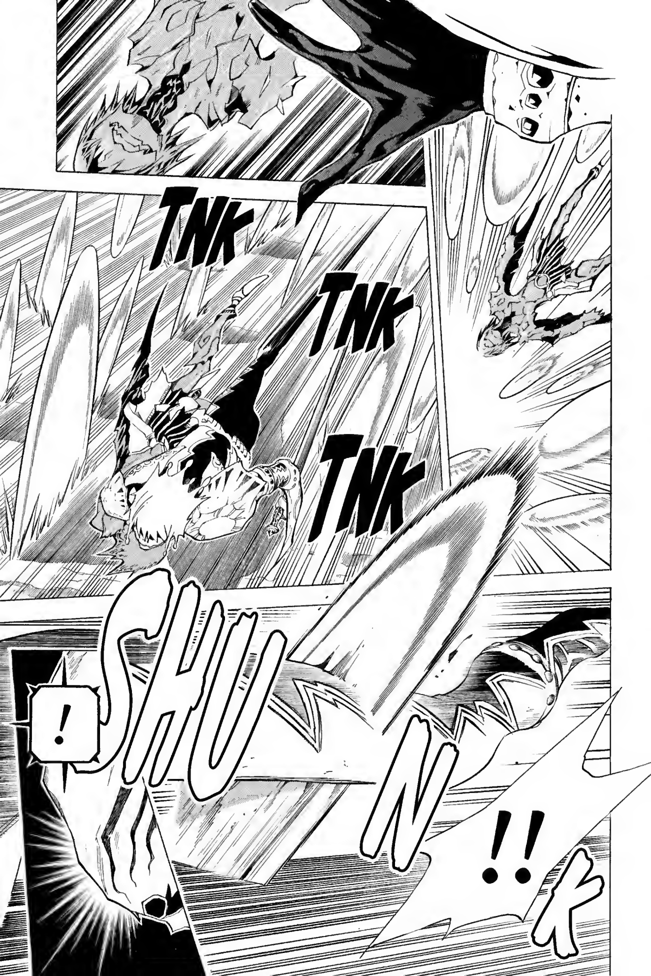

ZSH
ADIOS...
...DEAD MUCHACHOS.
Y-YOU'RE...!
SIR GANETTE?
THE INVINCIBLE SWORDSMAN?!
WOW!
THANK YOU SO MUCH!
S'UP.
KLANG
!
SWIP

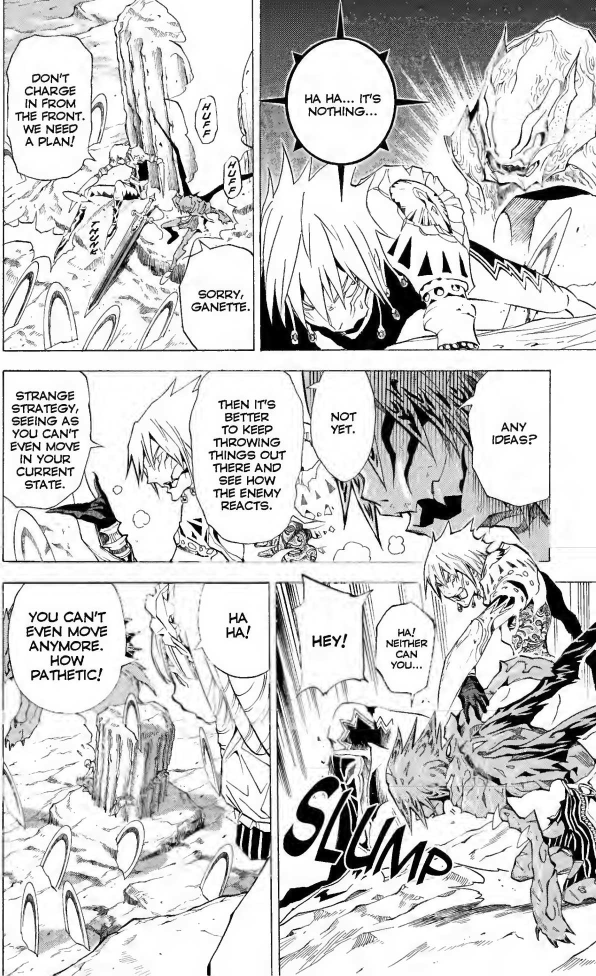

I EXPECTED NOTHING LESS FROM YOU, GANETTE.
YOU'RE THE FIRST ONE TO GET A SWORD THAT CLOSE TO ME.
WHO'RE YOU...
!
THE WHITE TIGER ?!
IT CAN'T BE...
BUT IT IS.
I CAME TO VERIFY YOUR STRENGTH AFTER HEARING THE RUMORS ABOUT YOU.
THE TIGER CHOOSES THOSE WITH POWER.
HE WANTS TO CHANGE HIS HOST FROM **ME** TO **YOU**.

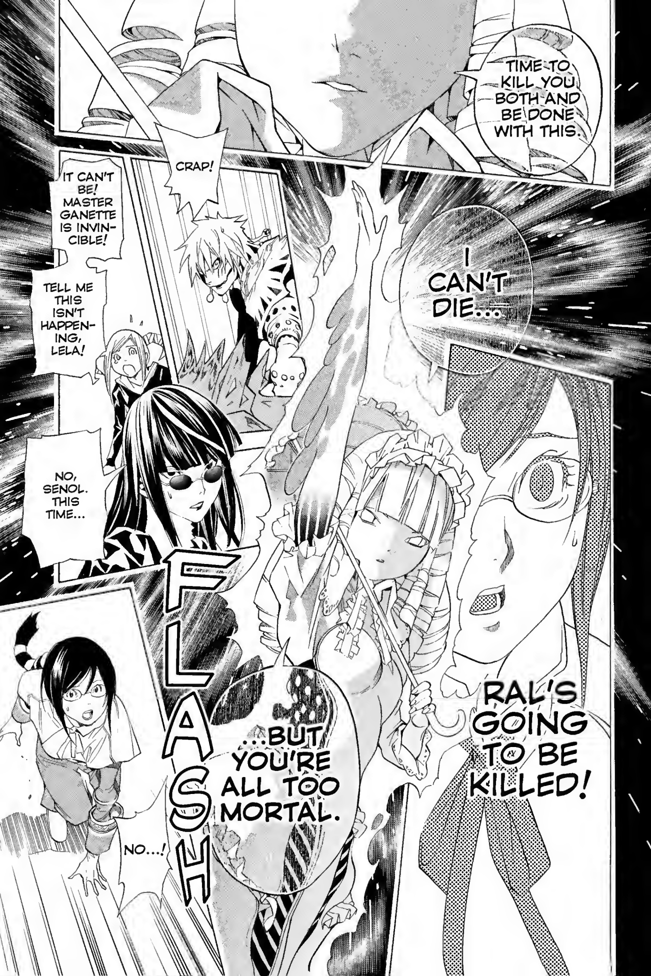

...
THANKS, BUT NO THANKS. I'M GLAD THAT THE TIGER ACKNOWLEDGES MY STRENGTH, BUT I'M NOT ABOUT TO TAKE ON A SHADOW.
WHAT YOU WANT DOESN'T MATTER. NO ONE CAN GO AGAINST THE WILL OF THE TIGER.
NOT EVEN I, THE HOST...
DIM THE LIGHTS.
FTT
...
GUESS IT BEATS DYING.
KRUNCH
SLURP

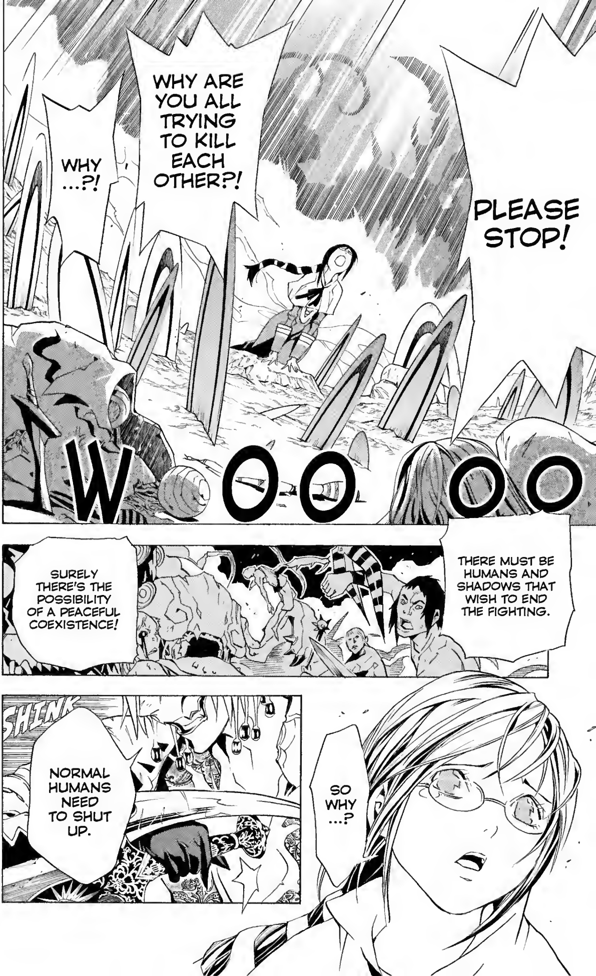

ADIOS.
GANETTE.
MY PURPOSE IS TO KILL OPSQURIA AND TO REVIVE LE NOIR.
TO DO THAT, I NEED TO POSSESS A HUMAN THAT IS AS STRONG AS POSSIBLE. WHENEVER I FIND A NEW HOST, I WILL DEVOUR THE PREVIOUS ONE TO GAIN HIS KNOWLEDGE AND ABILITIES.
...
SO UNLESS I REMAIN THE STRONGEST HUMAN DURING YOUR QUEST, I'LL BE EATEN TOO...
THAT'S RIGHT.
SINCE THAT DAY...
IF GAILA THINKS THAT I CAN'T WIN...
HE'LL EAT ME AND MOVE ON.

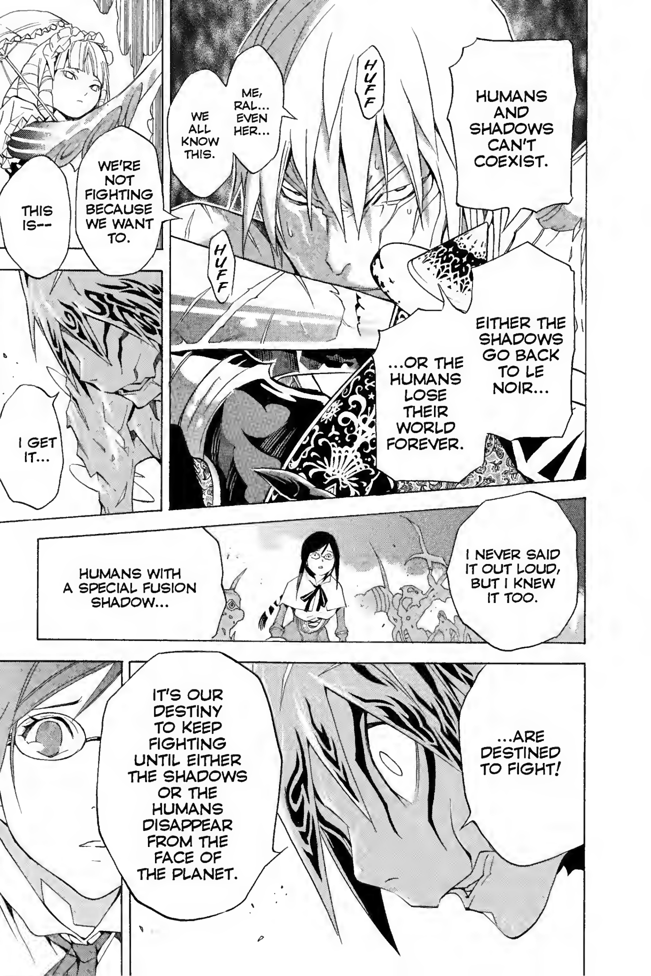

HOW CAN I TAKE HER DOWN?!
VAP VAP
HOW ANNOYING.
FOOM
"ROOST" DOESN'T WORK?! IS IT BECAUSE I'M WEAKENED?
NO. THE WIND FROM THE PHOENIX'S WINGS IS TOO STRONG.
I GUESS WE CAN'T FIGHT HER HEAD-ON.


TNK
TNK
TNK
SHUNK!!
!

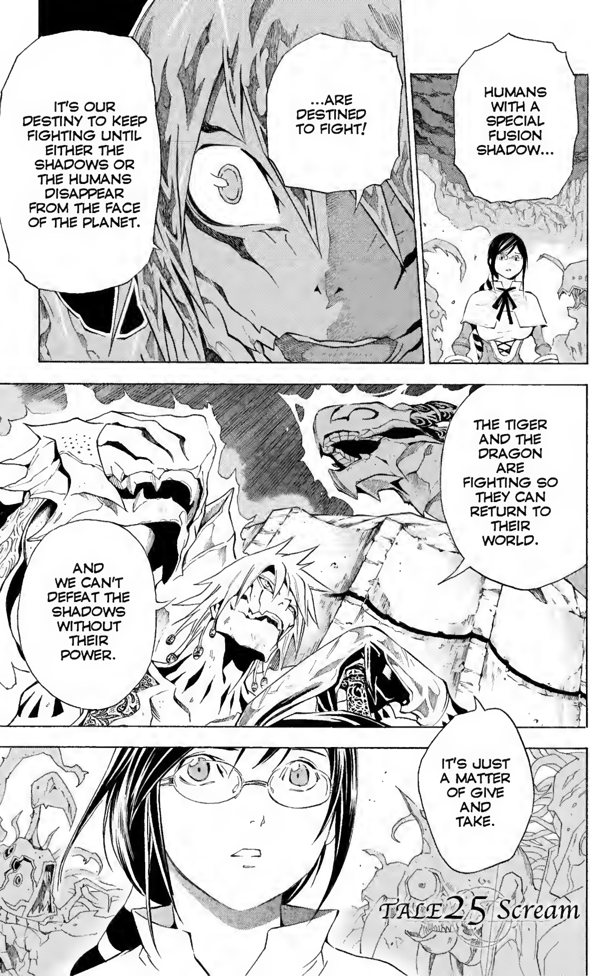

HA HA... IT'S NOTHING...
HUFF
HUFF
THUNK
SORRY, GANETTE.
DON'T CHARGE IN FROM THE FRONT. WE NEED A PLAN!
ANY IDEAS?
NOT YET.
THEN IT'S BETTER TO KEEP THROWING THINGS OUT THERE AND SEE HOW THE ENEMY REACTS.
STRANGE STRATEGY, SEEING AS YOU CAN'T EVEN MOVE IN YOUR CURRENT STATE.
HA! NEITHER CAN YOU...
HEY!
SLUMP
HA HA!
YOU CAN'T EVEN MOVE ANYMORE. HOW PATHETIC!


TIME TO KILL YOU BOTH AND BE DONE WITH THIS.
CRAP!
I CAN'T DIE...
IT CAN'T BE! MASTER GANETTE IS INVINCIBLE!
TELL ME THIS ISN'T HAPPENING, LELA!
NO, SENOL. THIS TIME...
...BUT YOU'RE ALL TOO MORTAL.
FLASH
RAL'S GOING TO BE KILLED!
NO...!

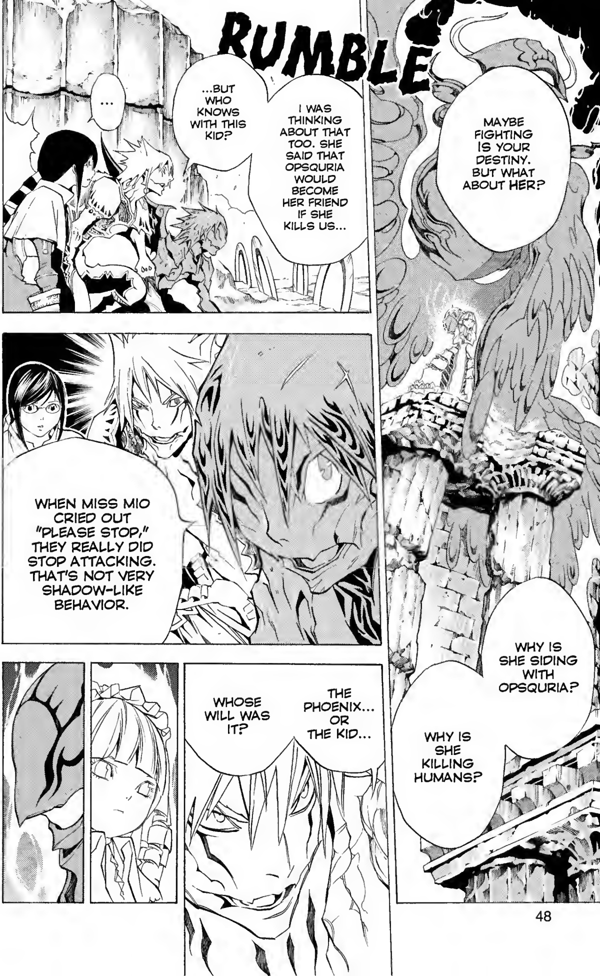

PLEASE STOP!
WHY ARE YOU ALL TRYING TO KILL EACH OTHER?!
WHY ...?!
WOOOO
THERE MUST BE HUMANS AND SHADOWS THAT WISH TO END THE FIGHTING.
SURELY THERE'S THE POSSIBILITY OF A PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE!
SO WHY ...?
SHINK
NORMAL HUMANS NEED TO SHUT UP.

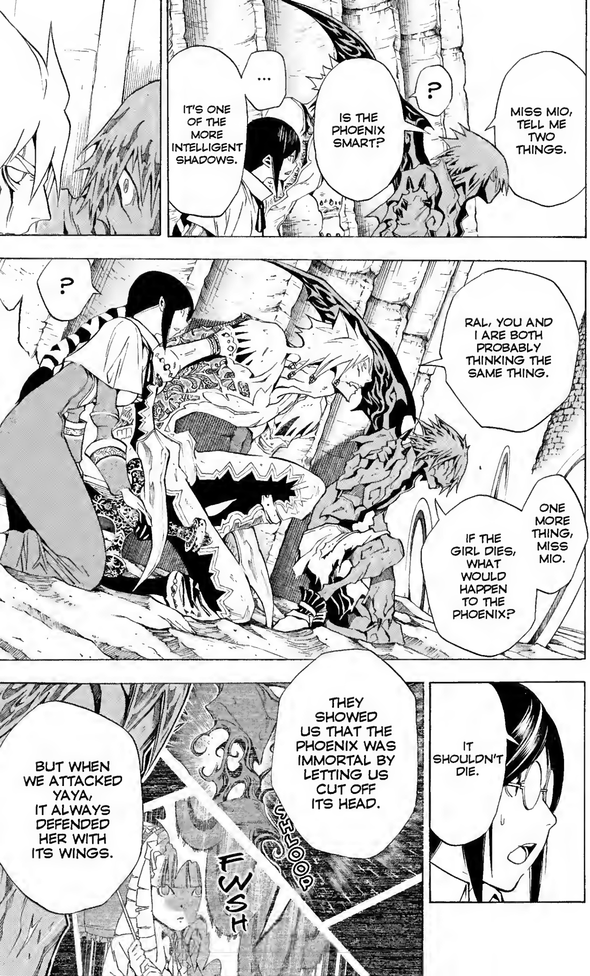

HUMANS AND SHADOWS CAN'T COEXIST.
HUFF
ME, RAL... EVEN HER...
WE ALL KNOW THIS.
HUFF
WE'RE NOT FIGHTING BECAUSE WE WANT TO.
THIS IS--
EITHER THE SHADOWS GO BACK TO LE NOIR...
...OR THE HUMANS LOSE THEIR WORLD FOREVER.
I GET IT...
I NEVER SAID IT OUT LOUD, BUT I KNEW IT TOO.
HUMANS WITH A SPECIAL FUSION SHADOW...
...ARE DESTINED TO FIGHT!
IT'S OUR DESTINY TO KEEP FIGHTING UNTIL EITHER THE SHADOWS OR THE HUMANS DISAPPEAR FROM THE FACE OF THE PLANET.

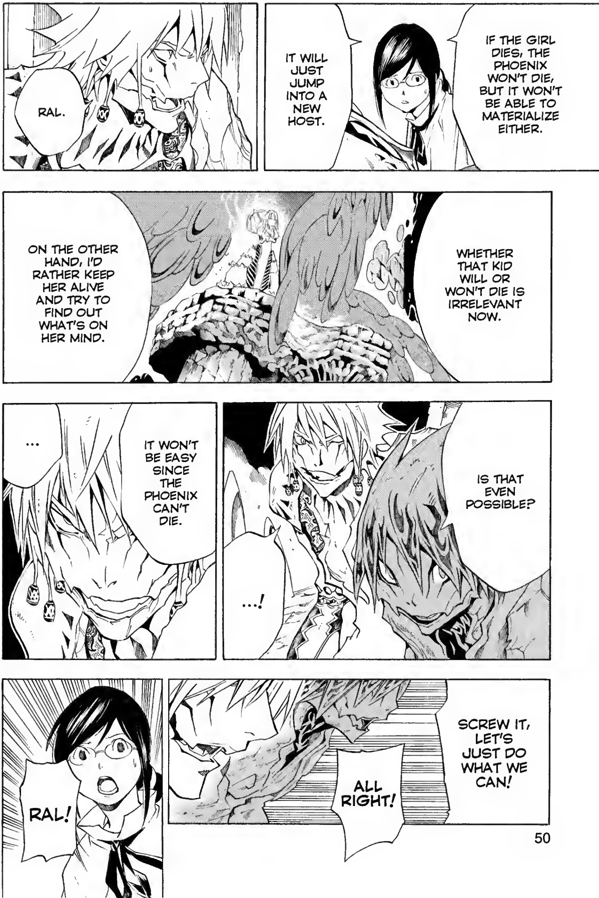
Ral Ω Grad

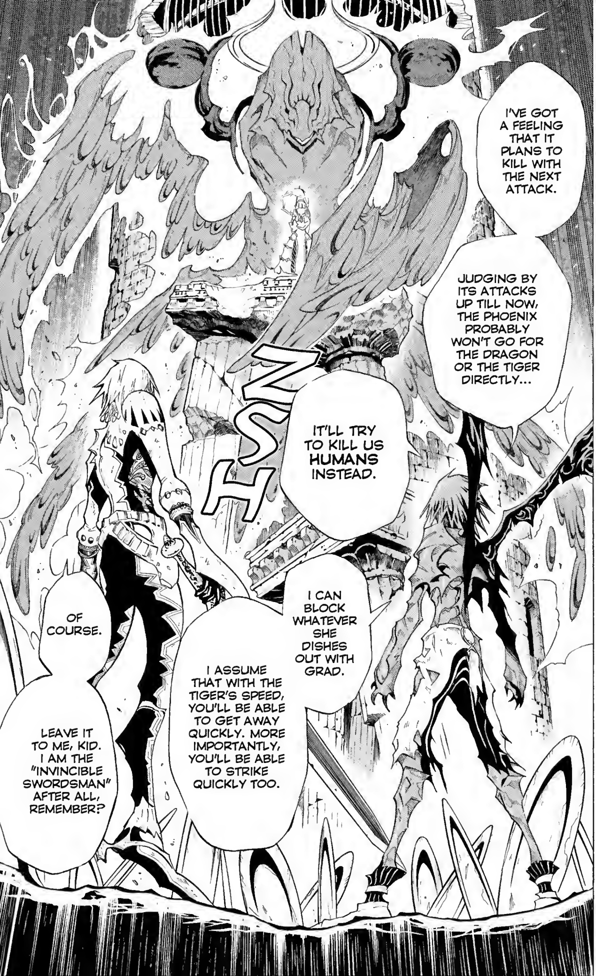

HUMANS WITH A SPECIAL FUSION SHADOW...
...ARE DESTINED TO FIGHT!
IT'S OUR DESTINY TO KEEP FIGHTING UNTIL EITHER THE SHADOWS OR THE HUMANS DISAPPEAR FROM THE FACE OF THE PLANET.
THE TIGER AND THE DRAGON ARE FIGHTING SO THEY CAN RETURN TO THEIR WORLD.
AND WE CAN'T DEFEAT THE SHADOWS WITHOUT THEIR POWER.
IT'S JUST A MATTER OF GIVE AND TAKE.

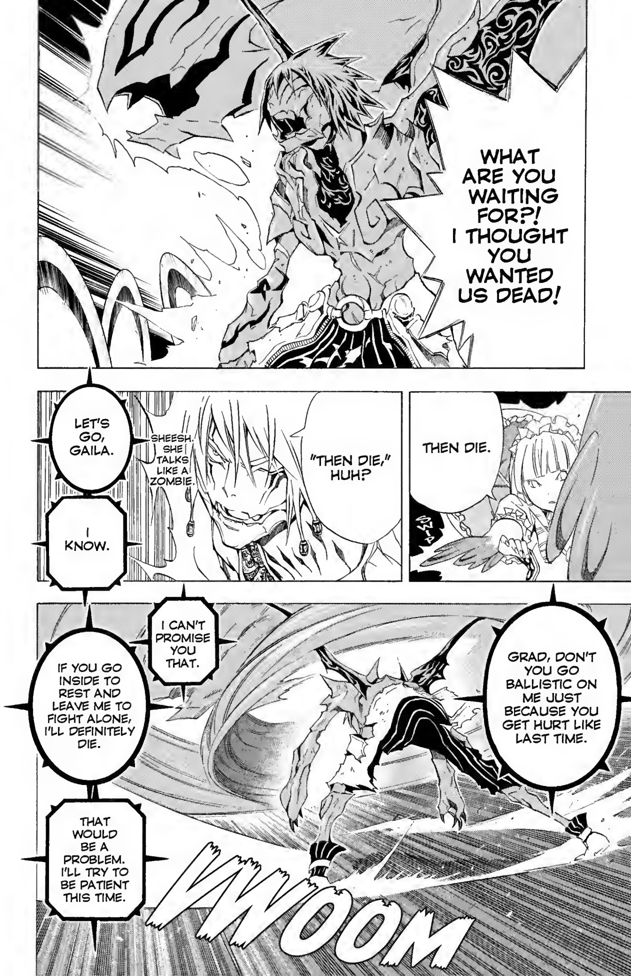
TALE 25 Scream

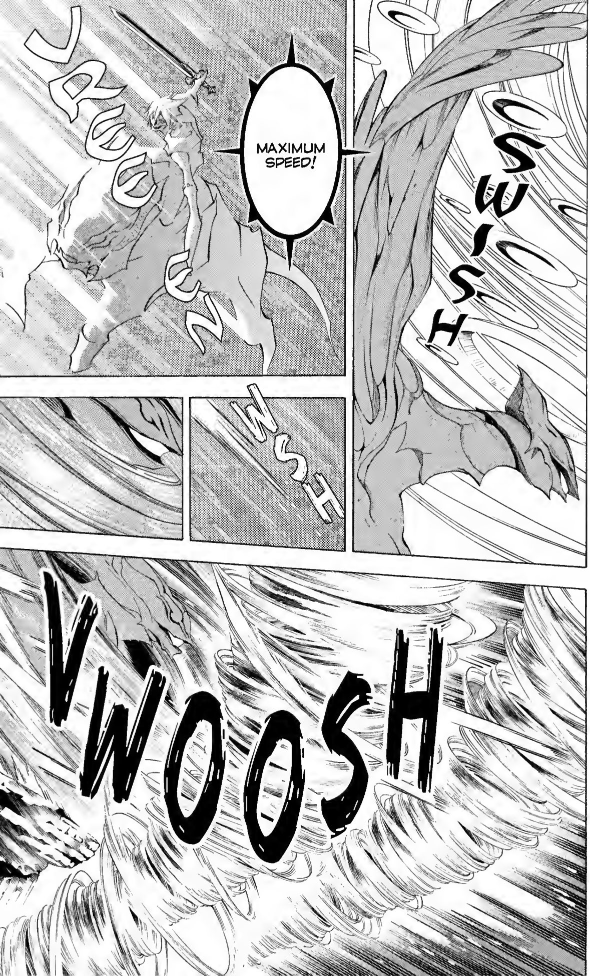

RUMBLE
MAYBE FIGHTING IS YOUR DESTINY. BUT WHAT ABOUT HER?
I WAS THINKING ABOUT THAT TOO. SHE SAID THAT OPSQURIA WOULD BECOME HER FRIEND IF SHE KILLS US...
...BUT WHO KNOWS WITH THIS KID?
...
WHEN MISS MIO CRIED OUT "PLEASE STOP," THEY REALLY DID STOP ATTACKING. THAT'S NOT VERY SHADOW-LIKE BEHAVIOR.
WHY IS SHE SIDING WITH OPSQURIA?
WHY IS SHE KILLING HUMANS?
THE PHOENIX... OR THE KID...
WHOSE WILL WAS IT?

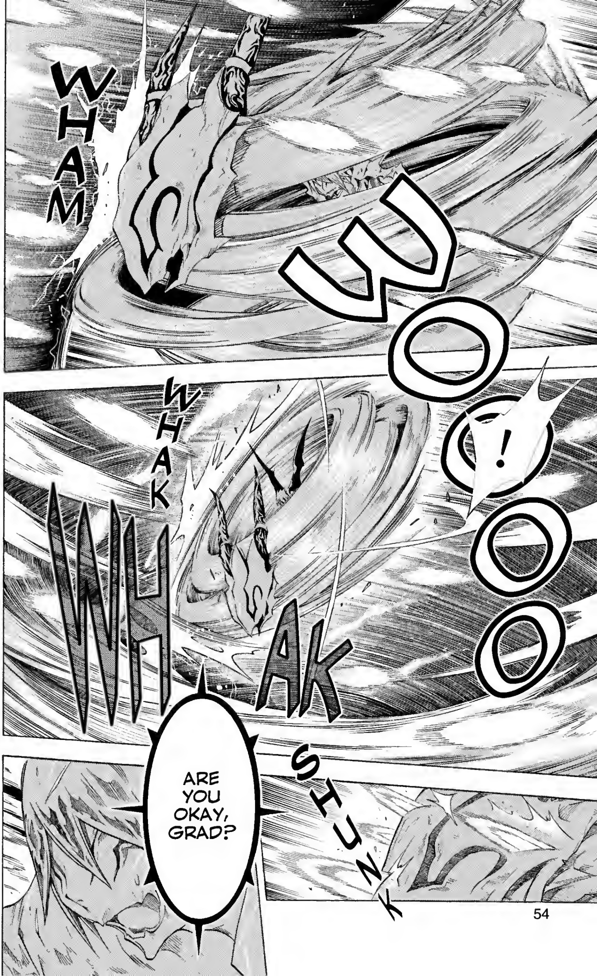

MISS MIO, TELL ME TWO THINGS.
?
IS THE PHOENIX SMART?
...
IT'S ONE OF THE MORE INTELLIGENT SHADOWS.
RAL, YOU AND I ARE BOTH PROBABLY THINKING THE SAME THING.
?
ONE MORE THING, MISS MIO.
IF THE GIRL DIES, WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO THE PHOENIX?
IT SHOULDN'T DIE.
THEY SHOWED US THAT THE PHOENIX WAS IMMORTAL BY LETTING US CUT OFF ITS HEAD.
SHLOOP
FWSH
BUT WHEN WE ATTACKED YAYA, IT ALWAYS DEFENDED HER WITH ITS WINGS.

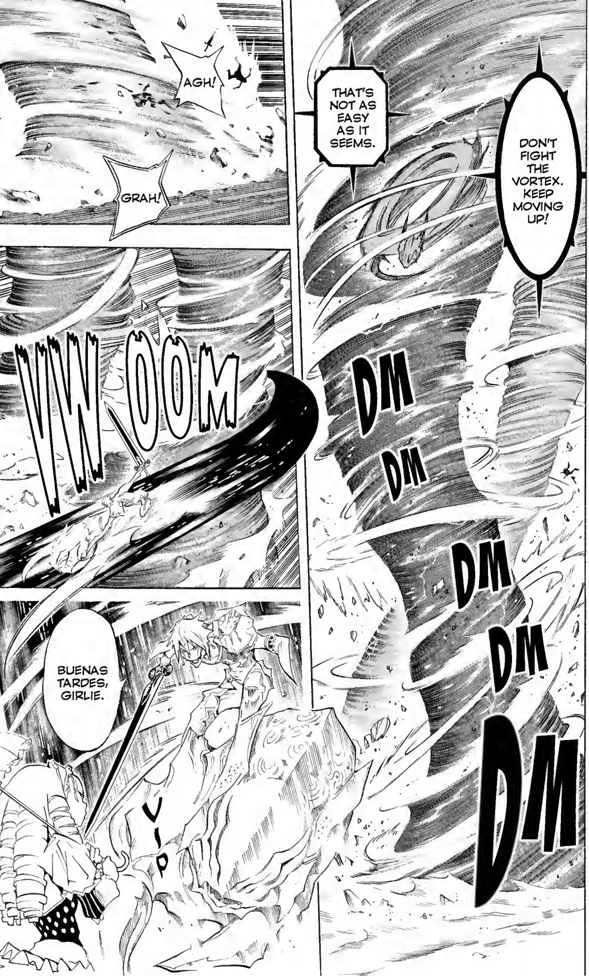

IF THE GIRL DIES, THE PHOENIX WON'T DIE, BUT IT WON'T BE ABLE TO MATERIALIZE EITHER.
IT WILL JUST JUMP INTO A NEW HOST.
RAL.
WHETHER THAT KID WILL OR WON'T DIE IS IRRELEVANT NOW.
ON THE OTHER HAND, I'D RATHER KEEP HER ALIVE AND TRY TO FIND OUT WHAT'S ON HER MIND.
IS THAT EVEN POSSIBLE?
...!
IT WON'T BE EASY SINCE THE PHOENIX CAN'T DIE.
...
SCREW IT, LET'S JUST DO WHAT WE CAN!
ALL RIGHT!
RAL!

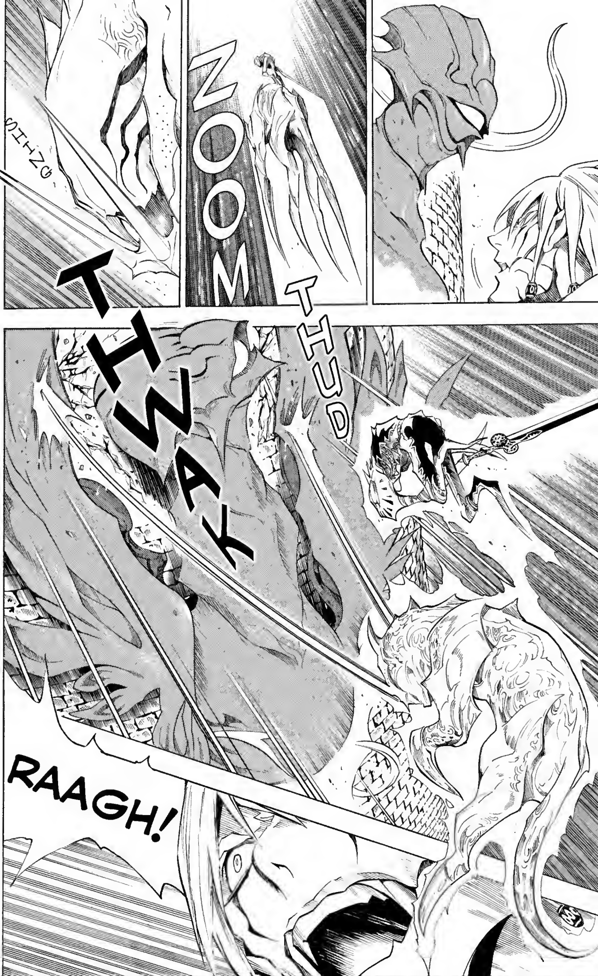

I'VE GOT A FEELING THAT IT PLANS TO KILL WITH THE NEXT ATTACK.
JUDGING BY ITS ATTACKS UP TILL NOW, THE PHOENIX PROBABLY WON'T GO FOR THE DRAGON OR THE TIGER DIRECTLY...
ZWSH
IT'LL TRY TO KILL US **HUMANS** INSTEAD.
I CAN BLOCK WHATEVER SHE DISHES OUT WITH GRAD.
I ASSUME THAT WITH THE TIGER'S SPEED, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO GET AWAY QUICKLY. MORE IMPORTANTLY, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO STRIKE QUICKLY TOO.
OF COURSE.
LEAVE IT TO ME, KID. I AM THE "INVINCIBLE SWORDSMAN" AFTER ALL, REMEMBER?

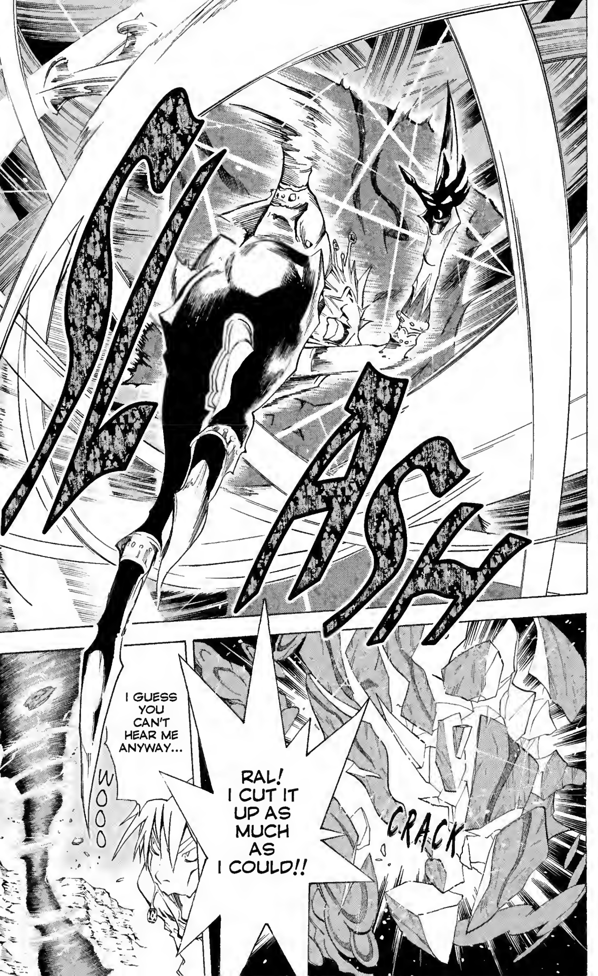

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?! I THOUGHT YOU WANTED US DEAD!
THEN DIE.
SWIP
"THEN DIE," HUH?
SHEESH. SHE TALKS LIKE A ZOMBIE.
LET'S GO, GAILA.
I KNOW.
GRAD, DON'T YOU GO BALLISTIC ON ME JUST BECAUSE YOU GET HURT LIKE LAST TIME.
I CAN'T PROMISE YOU THAT.
IF YOU GO INSIDE TO REST AND LEAVE ME TO FIGHT ALONE, I'LL DEFINITELY DIE.
THAT WOULD BE A PROBLEM. I'LL TRY TO BE PATIENT THIS TIME.
VWOOM

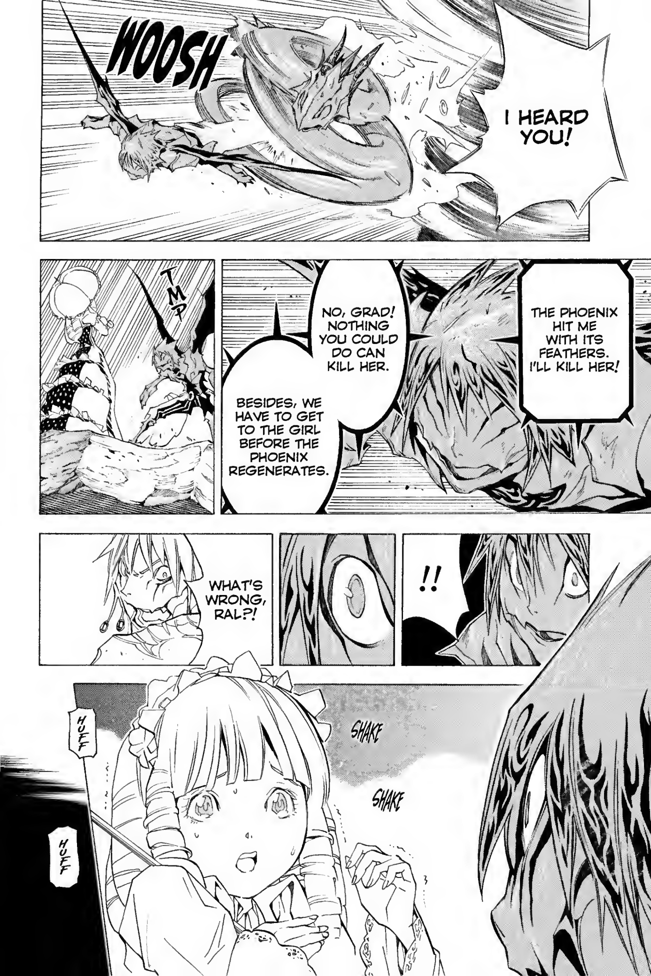

SWISH
MAXIMUM SPEED!
VRUUUN
WSH
VWOOSH

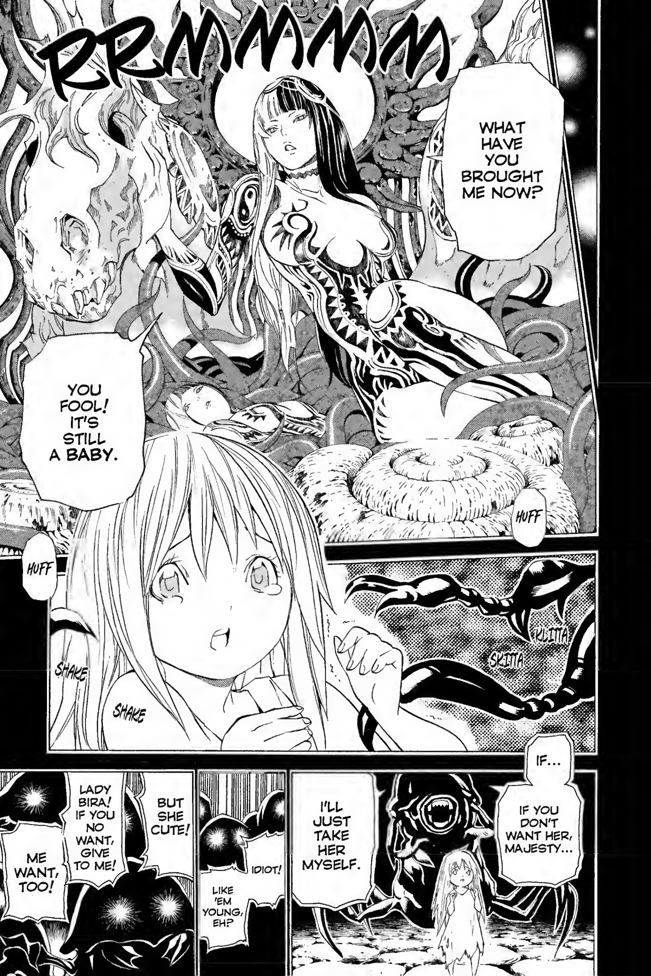

WHAM
WOOOO
!
WHAK
WHAK
SHUNK
ARE YOU OKAY, GRAD?

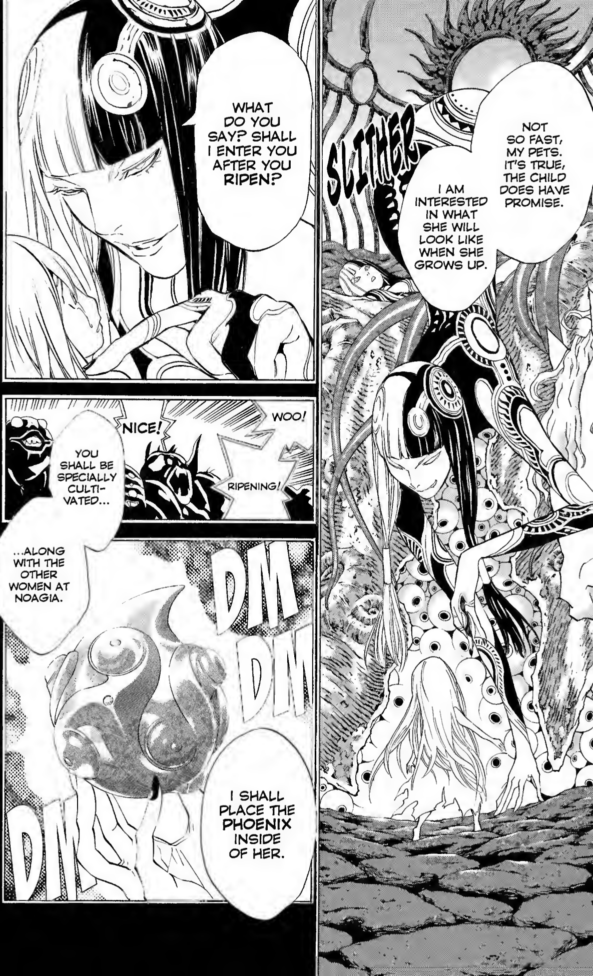

DON'T FIGHT THE VORTEX. KEEP MOVING UP!
THAT'S NOT AS EASY AS IT SEEMS.
DM
DM
DM
DM
DM
AGH!
GRAH!
VWOOM
BUENAS TARDES, GIRLIE.
VIP

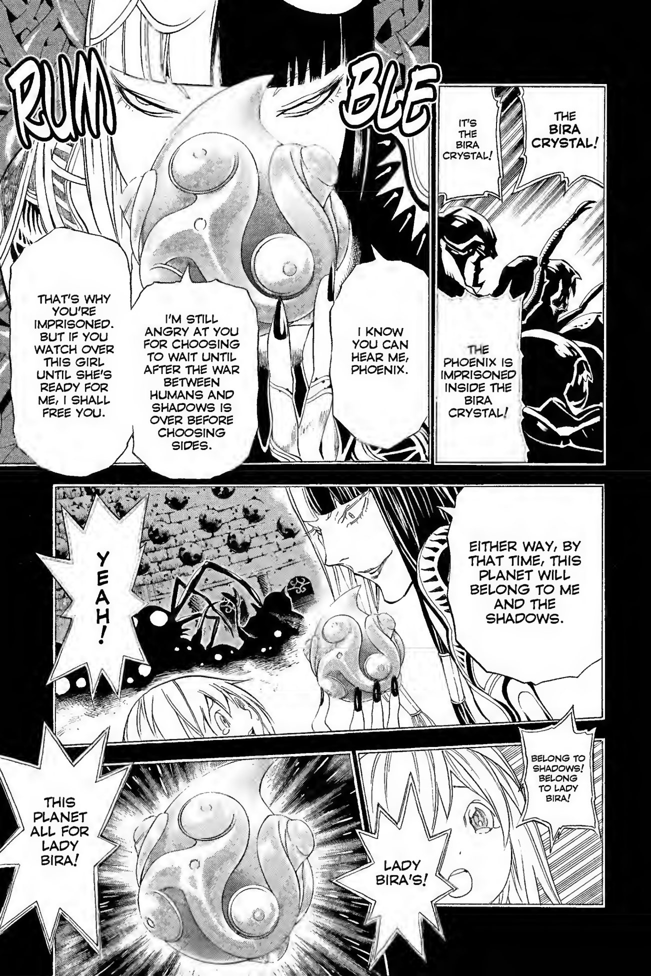

ZOOM
SHIZG
THWAK
THUD
RAAGH!

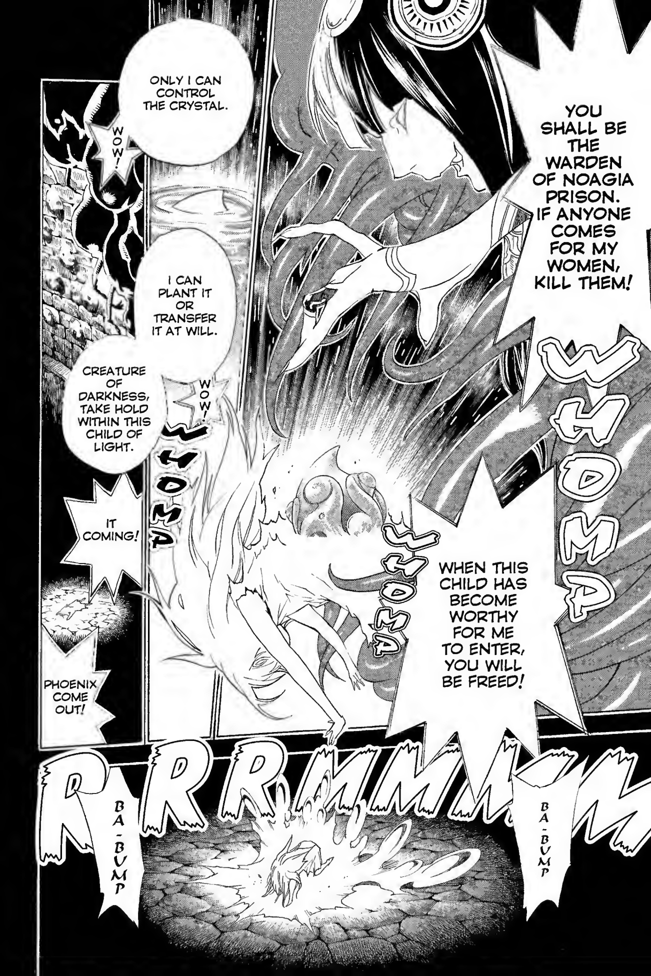

CLASH
CRACK
RAL! I CUT IT UP AS MUCH AS I COULD!!
I GUESS YOU CAN'T HEAR ME ANYWAY...
WOOO

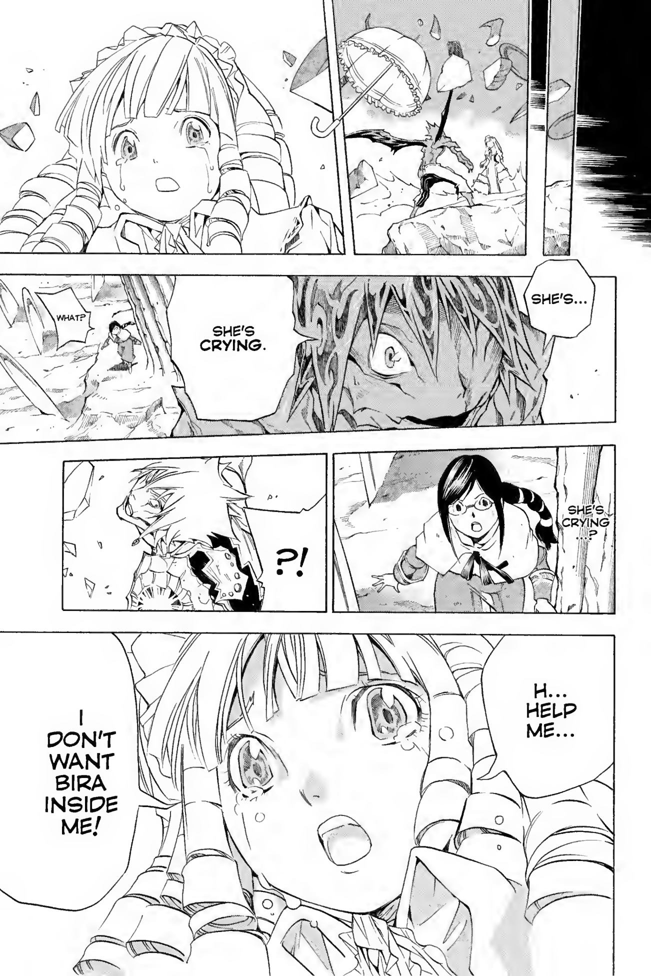

I HEARD YOU!
WOOSH
THE PHOENIX HIT ME WITH ITS FEATHERS. I'LL KILL HER!
NO, GRAD! NOTHING YOU COULD DO CAN KILL HER.
BESIDES, WE HAVE TO GET TO THE GIRL BEFORE THE PHOENIX REGENERATES.
TMP
!!
WHAT'S WRONG, RAL?!
SHAKE
SHAKE
HUFF
HUFF

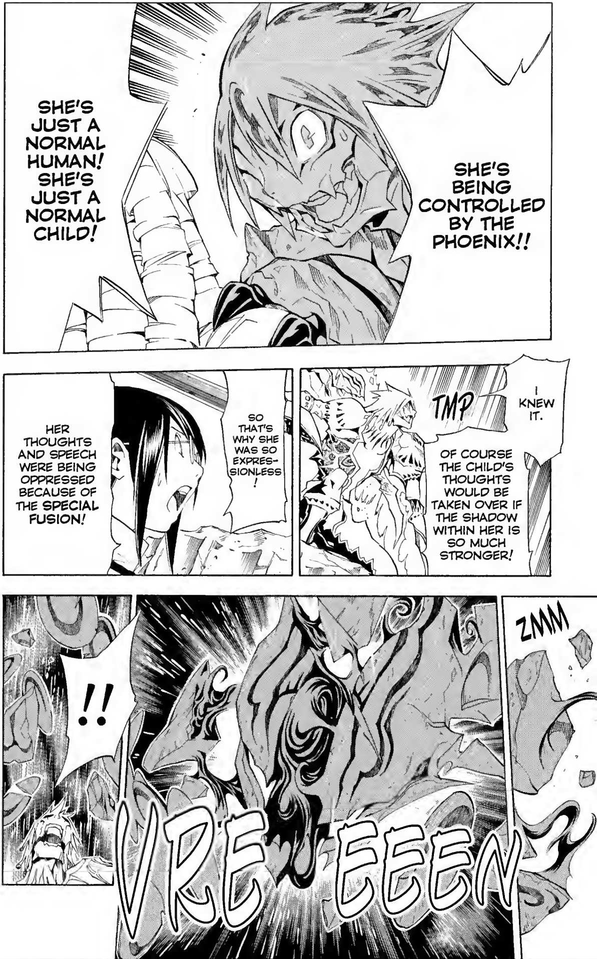

RRMMM
WHAT HAVE YOU BROUGHT ME NOW?
YOU FOOL! IT'S STILL A BABY.
HUFF
HUFF
KLITTA
SKITTA
SHAKE
SHAKE
IF...
IF YOU DON'T WANT HER, MAJESTY...
I'LL JUST TAKE HER MYSELF.
IDIOT!
LIKE 'EM YOUNG, EH?
BUT SHE CUTE!
LADY BIRA! IF YOU NO WANT, GIVE TO ME!
ME WANT, TOO!

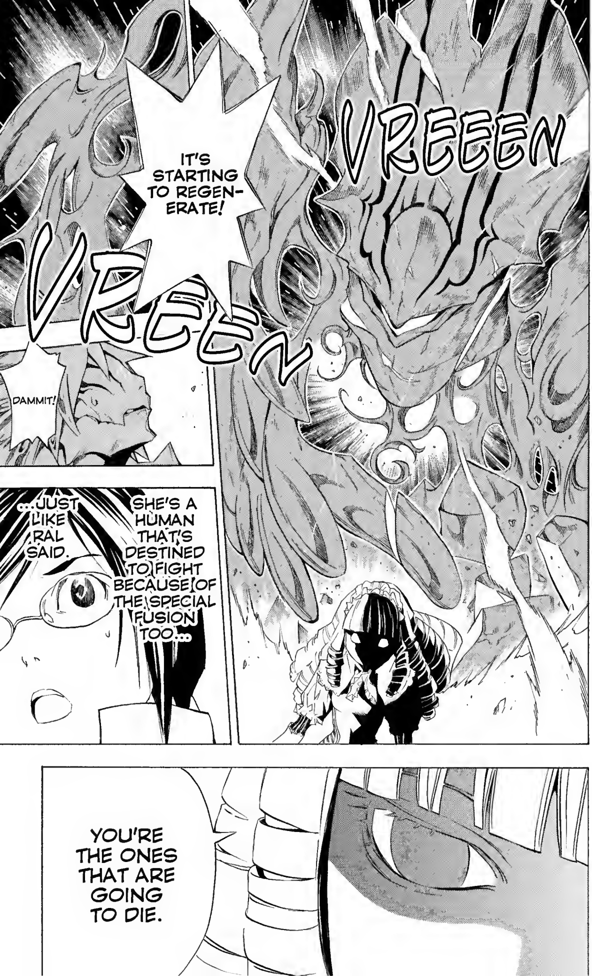

NOT SO FAST, MY PETS. IT'S TRUE, THE CHILD DOES HAVE PROMISE.
SLITHER
I AM INTERESTED IN WHAT SHE WILL LOOK LIKE WHEN SHE GROWS UP.
WHAT DO YOU SAY? SHALL I ENTER YOU AFTER YOU RIPEN?
WOO!
NICE!
RIPENING!
YOU SHALL BE SPECIALLY CULTIVATED...
...ALONG WITH THE OTHER WOMEN AT NOAGIA.
DM
DM
DM
I SHALL PLACE THE PHOENIX INSIDE OF HER.


RUMBLE
THE BIRA CRYSTAL!
IT'S THE BIRA CRYSTAL!
THE PHOENIX IS IMPRISONED INSIDE THE BIRA CRYSTAL!
I KNOW YOU CAN HEAR ME, PHOENIX.
I'M STILL ANGRY AT YOU FOR CHOOSING TO WAIT UNTIL AFTER THE WAR BETWEEN HUMANS AND SHADOWS IS OVER BEFORE CHOOSING SIDES.
THAT'S WHY YOU'RE IMPRISONED. BUT IF YOU WATCH OVER THIS GIRL UNTIL SHE'S READY FOR ME, I SHALL FREE YOU.
EITHER WAY, BY THAT TIME, THIS PLANET WILL BELONG TO ME AND THE SHADOWS.
YEAH!
BELONG TO SHADOWS! BELONG TO LADY BIRA!
LADY BIRA'S!
THIS PLANET ALL FOR LADY BIRA!


YOU SHALL BE THE WARDEN OF NOAGIA PRISON. IF ANYONE COMES FOR MY WOMEN, KILL THEM!
WHOMP
ONLY I CAN CONTROL THE CRYSTAL.
I CAN PLANT IT OR TRANSFER IT AT WILL.
CREATURE OF DARKNESS, TAKE HOLD WITHIN THIS CHILD OF LIGHT.
WHEN THIS CHILD HAS BECOME WORTHY FOR ME TO ENTER, YOU WILL BE FREED!
WHOMP
WHOMP
WOW!
WOW!
IT COMING!
PHOENIX COME OUT!
RRRMMMM
BA-BUMP
BA-BUMP

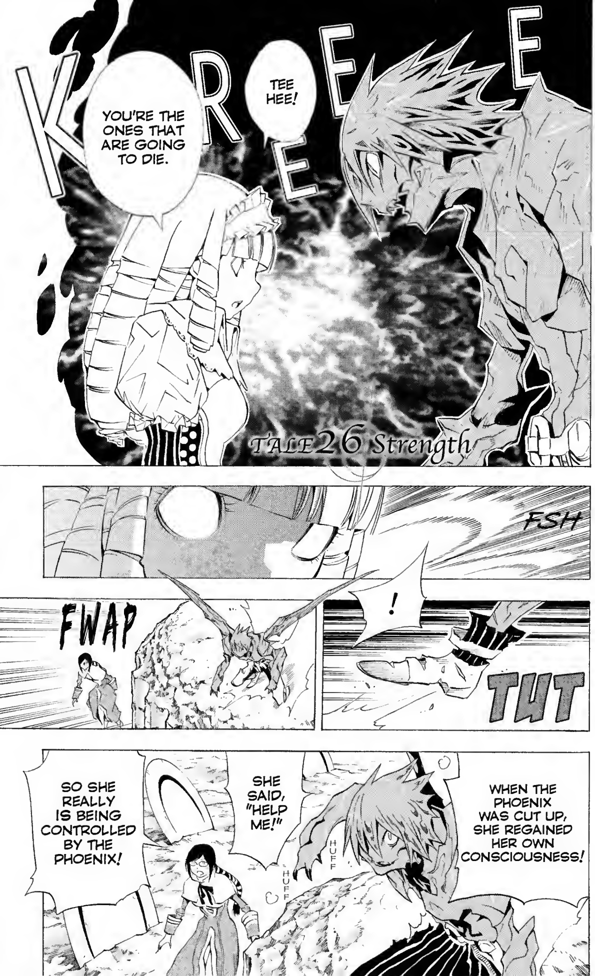

SHE'S...
SHE'S CRYING.
WHAT?
SHE'S CRYING...?
?!
H... HELP ME...
I DON'T WANT BIRA INSIDE ME!

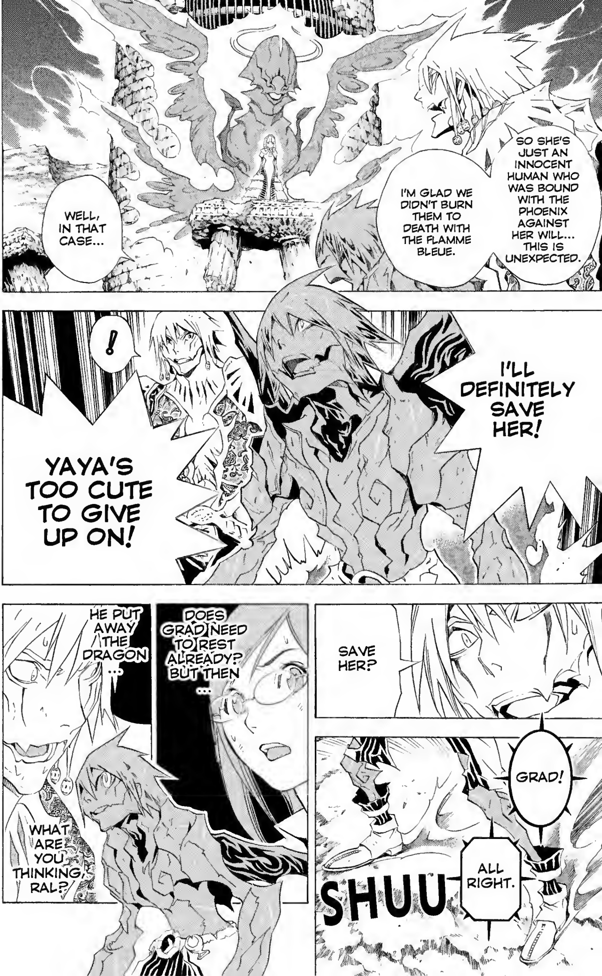

SHE'S BEING CONTROLLED BY THE PHOENIX!!
SHE'S JUST A NORMAL HUMAN! SHE'S JUST A NORMAL CHILD!
I KNEW IT.
TMP
OF COURSE THE CHILD'S THOUGHTS WOULD BE TAKEN OVER IF THE SHADOW WITHIN HER IS SO MUCH STRONGER!
SO THAT'S WHY SHE WAS SO EXPRESSIONLESS!
HER THOUGHTS AND SPEECH WERE BEING OPPRESSED BECAUSE OF THE SPECIAL FUSION!
ZMM
!!
VRE EEEN

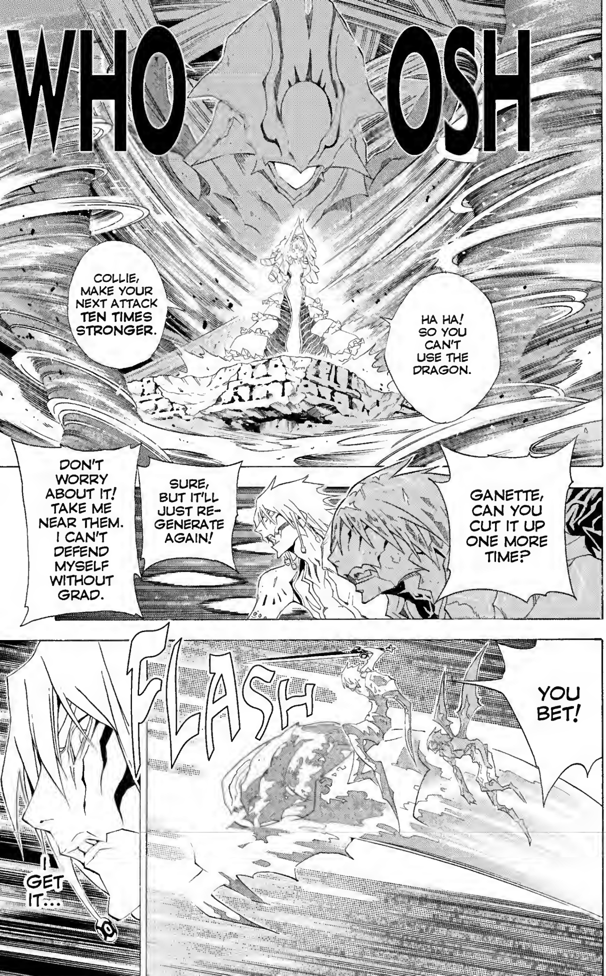

VREEEN
IT'S STARTING TO REGENERATE!
VREEEN
DAMMIT!
SHE'S A HUMAN THAT'S DESTINED TO FIGHT BECAUSE OF THE SPECIAL FUSION TOO...
...JUST LIKE RAL SAID.
YOU'RE THE ONES THAT ARE GOING TO DIE.

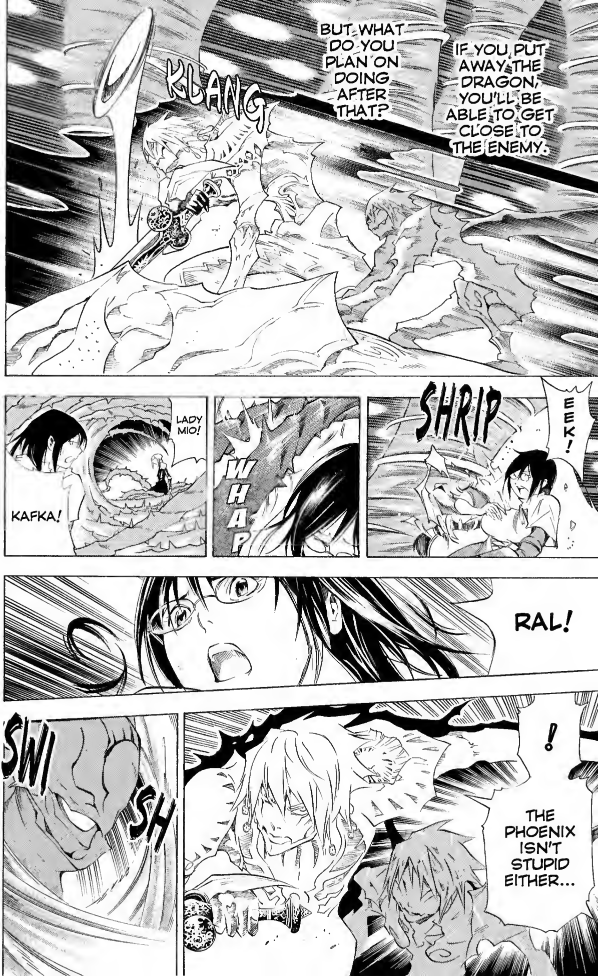
Ral Ω Grad

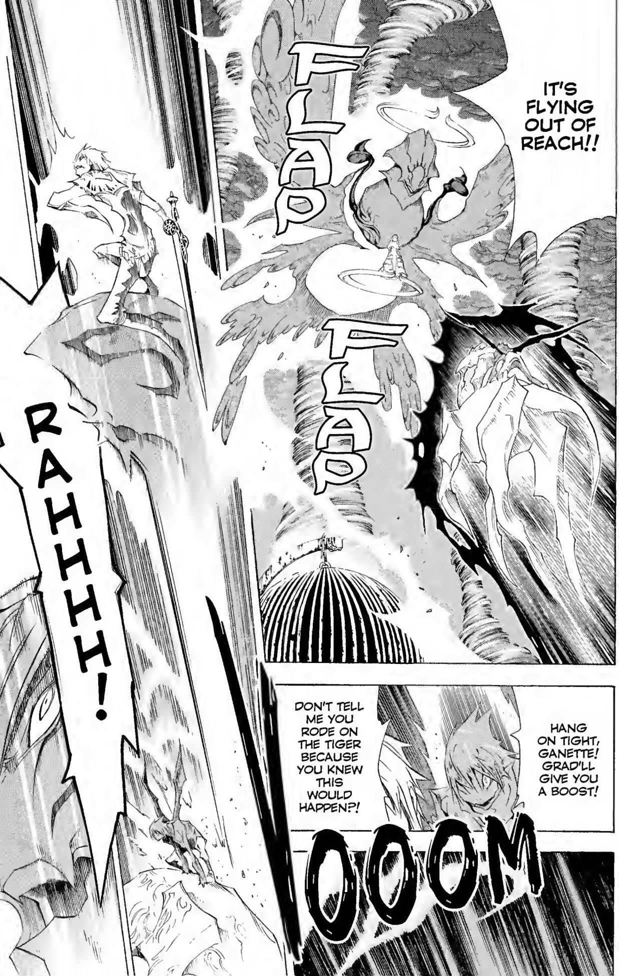
TALE 26 Strength

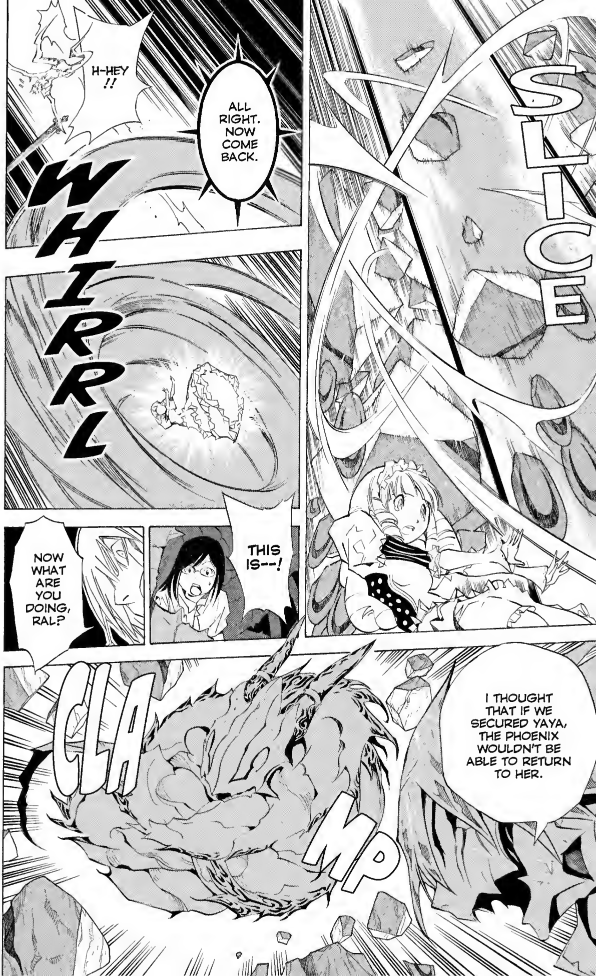

KREEEE
TEE HEE!
YOU'RE THE ONES THAT ARE GOING TO DIE.
FSH
!
TUT
FWAP
WHEN THE PHOENIX WAS CUT UP, SHE REGAINED HER OWN CONSCIOUSNESS!
HUFF HUFF
SHE SAID, "HELP ME!"
SO SHE REALLY IS BEING CONTROLLED BY THE PHOENIX!

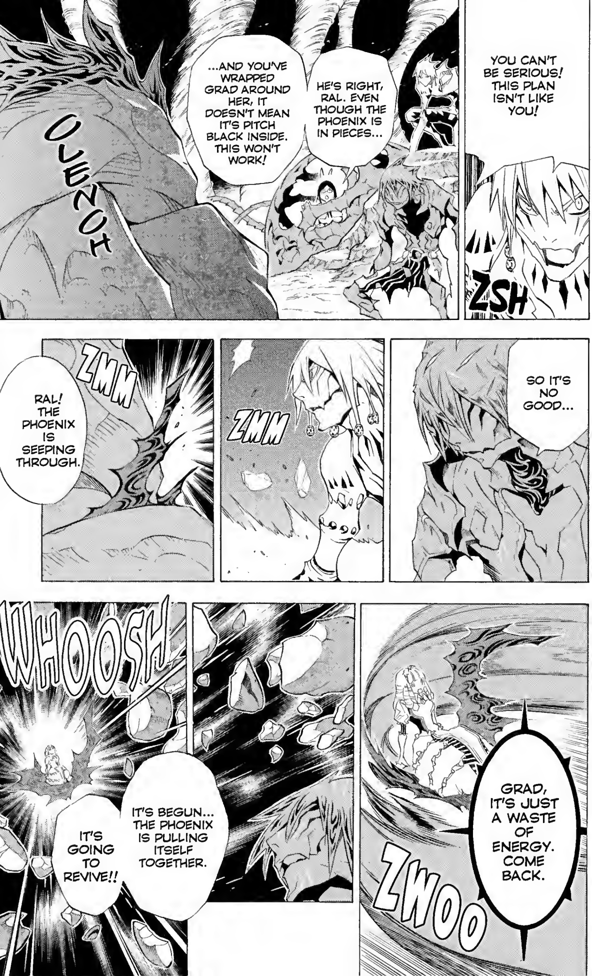

SO SHE'S JUST AN INNOCENT HUMAN WHO WAS BOUND WITH THE PHOENIX AGAINST HER WILL... THIS IS UNEXPECTED.
I'M GLAD WE DIDN'T BURN THEM TO DEATH WITH THE FLAMME BLEUE.
WELL, IN THAT CASE...
I'LL DEFINITELY SAVE HER!
YAYA'S TOO CUTE TO GIVE UP ON!
!
SAVE HER?
DOES GRAD NEED TO REST ALREADY? BUT THEN...
HE PUT AWAY THE DRAGON...
GRAD!
ALL RIGHT.
SHUU
WHAT ARE YOU THINKING, RAL?

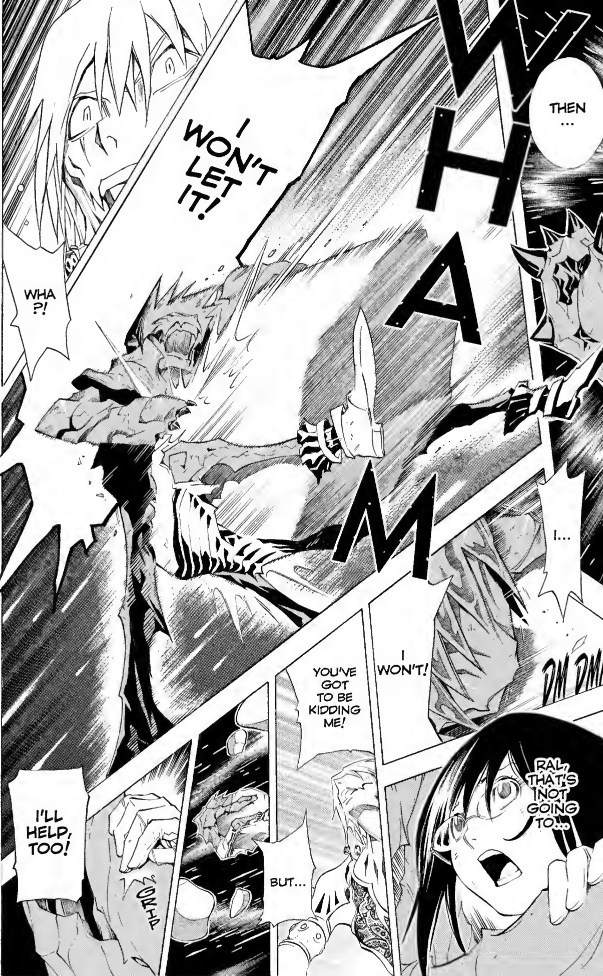

WHOOSH
HA HA! SO YOU CAN'T USE THE DRAGON.
COLLIE, MAKE YOUR NEXT ATTACK TEN TIMES STRONGER.
GANETTE, CAN YOU CUT IT UP ONE MORE TIME?
SURE, BUT IT'LL JUST REGENERATE AGAIN!
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT! TAKE ME NEAR THEM. I CAN'T DEFEND MYSELF WITHOUT GRAD.
YOU BET!
FLASH
I GET IT...

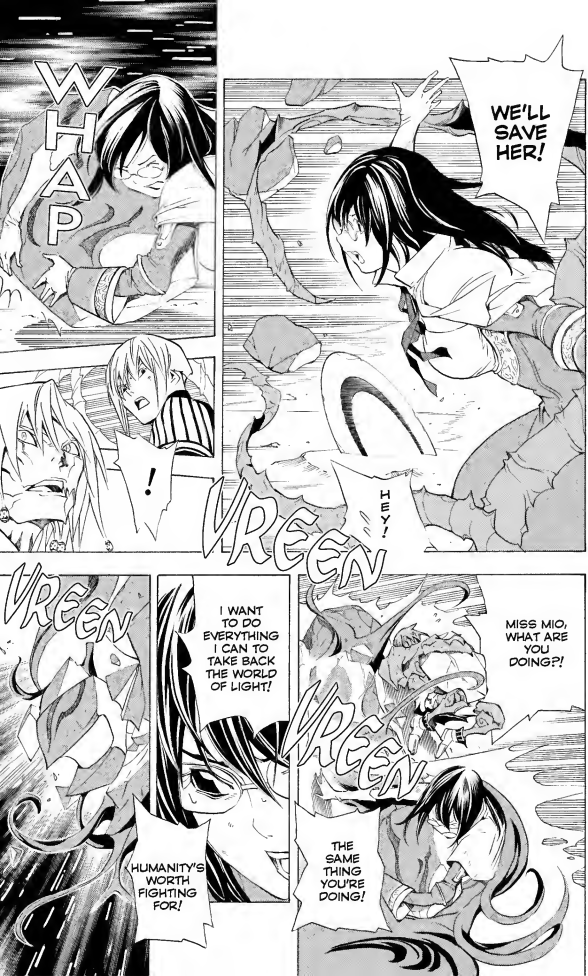

IF YOU PUT AWAY THE DRAGON, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO GET CLOSE TO THE ENEMY.
BUT WHAT DO YOU PLAN ON DOING AFTER THAT?
KLANG
EEK!
SHRIP
WHAP
LADY MIO!
KAFKA!
RAL!
!
THE PHOENIX ISN'T STUPID EITHER...
SWISH

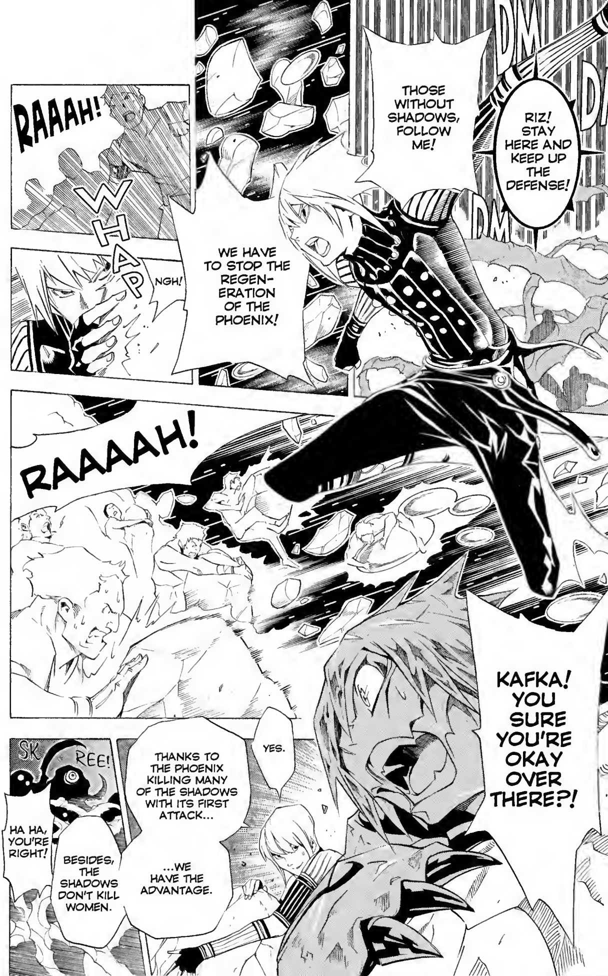

IT'S FLYING OUT OF REACH!!
FLAP
FLAP
RAHHHH!
HANG ON TIGHT, GANETTE! GRAD'LL GIVE YOU A BOOST!
DON'T TELL ME YOU RODE ON THE TIGER BECAUSE YOU KNEW THIS WOULD HAPPEN?!
OOOM

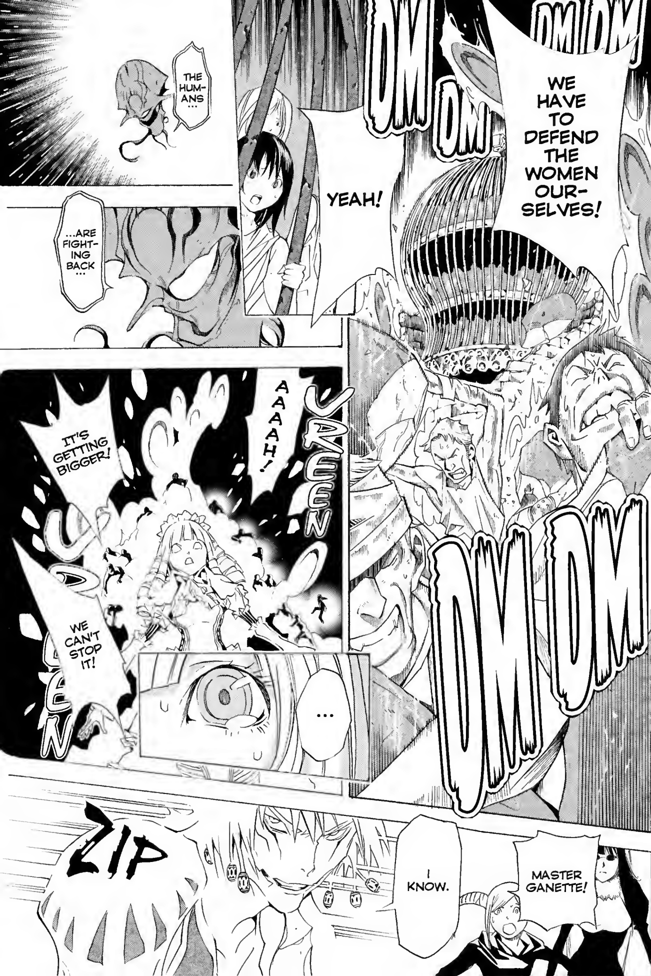

SLICE
ALL RIGHT. NOW COME BACK.
H-HEY!!
WHIRRL
THIS IS--!
NOW WHAT ARE YOU DOING, RAL?
I THOUGHT THAT IF WE SECURED YAYA, THE PHOENIX WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO RETURN TO HER.
CLAMP

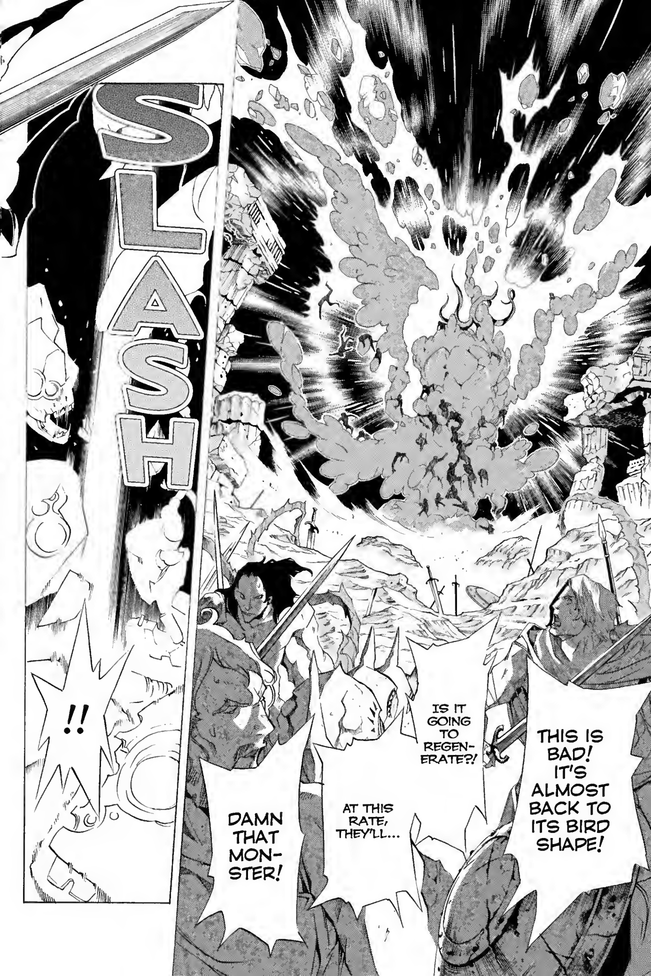

YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS! THIS PLAN ISN'T LIKE YOU!
ZSH
HE'S RIGHT, RAL. EVEN THOUGH THE PHOENIX IS IN PIECES...
...AND YOU'VE WRAPPED GRAD AROUND HER, IT DOESN'T MEAN IT'S PITCH BLACK INSIDE. THIS WON'T WORK!
CLENCH
SO IT'S NO GOOD...
ZMM
ZMM
RAL! THE PHOENIX IS SEEPING THROUGH.
GRAD, IT'S JUST A WASTE OF ENERGY. COME BACK.
ZWOO
IT'S BEGUN... THE PHOENIX IS PULLING ITSELF TOGETHER.
WHOOSH
IT'S GOING TO REVIVE!!

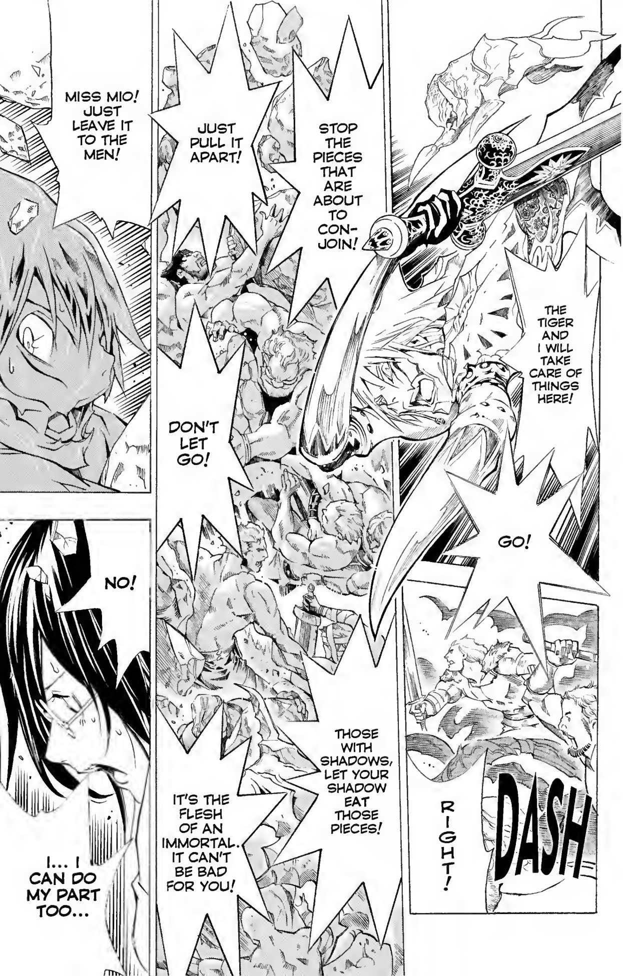

THEN ...
WHAM
I WON'T LET IT!
WHA ?!
I...
DM DM
I WON'T!
YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME!
RAL, THAT'S NOT GOING TO...
BUT...
GRIP
I'LL HELP, TOO!

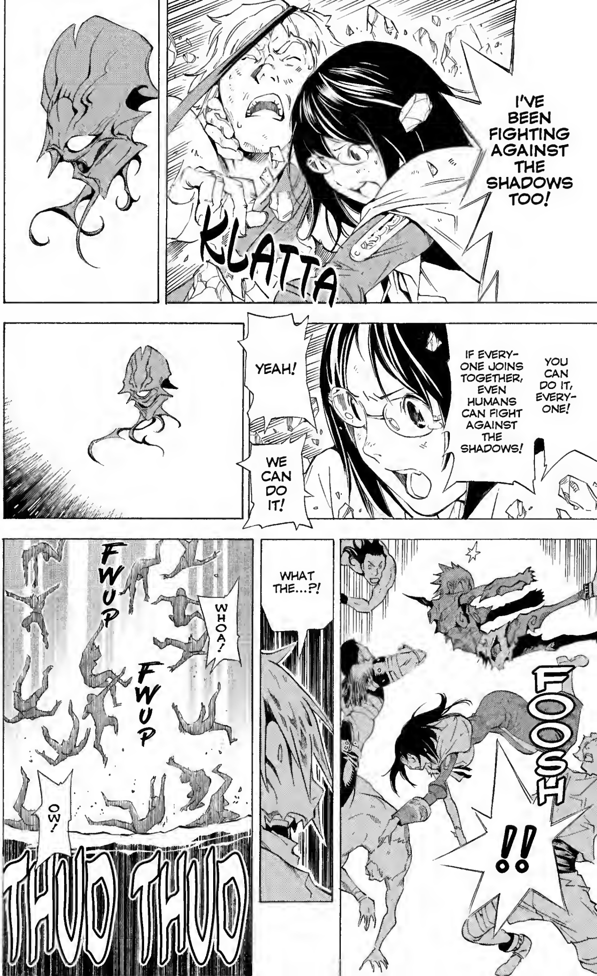

WE'LL SAVE HER!
WHAP
!
HEY!
VREEN
MISS MIO, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
VREEN
THE SAME THING YOU'RE DOING!
I WANT TO DO EVERYTHING I CAN TO TAKE BACK THE WORLD OF LIGHT!
HUMANITY'S WORTH FIGHTING FOR!
VREEN

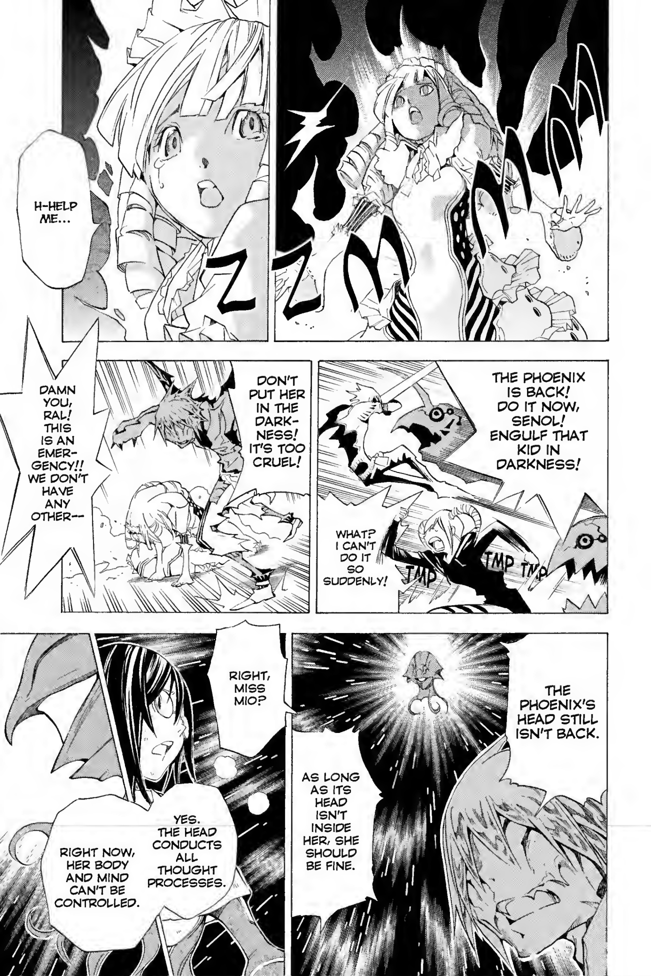

DM DA DM
RIZ! STAY HERE AND KEEP UP THE DEFENSE!
THOSE WITHOUT SHADOWS, FOLLOW ME!
WE HAVE TO STOP THE REGENERATION OF THE PHOENIX!
RAAAH!
WHAP
NGH!
RAAAAH!
KAFKA! YOU SURE YOU'RE OKAY OVER THERE?!
YES.
THANKS TO THE PHOENIX KILLING MANY OF THE SHADOWS WITH ITS FIRST ATTACK...
...WE HAVE THE ADVANTAGE.
SKREE!
HA HA, YOU'RE RIGHT!
BESIDES, THE SHADOWS DON'T KILL WOMEN.

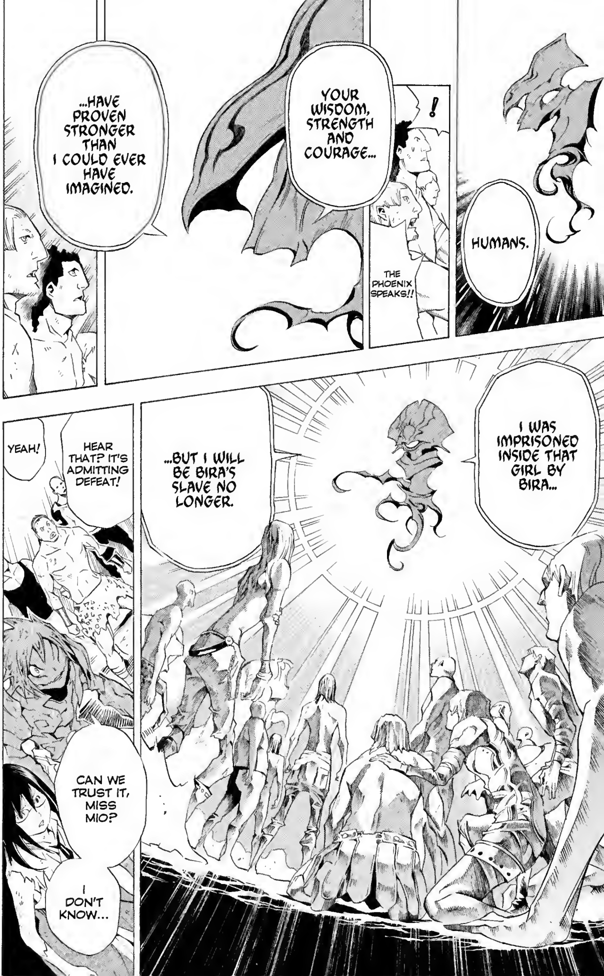

DM DM DM DM
WE HAVE TO DEFEND THE WOMEN OURSELVES!
YEAH!
THE HUMANS...
...ARE FIGHTING BACK...
DM DM
JREEN
AAAAH!
IT'S GETTING BIGGER!
WE CAN'T STOP IT!
...
MASTER GANETTE!
I KNOW.
ZIP

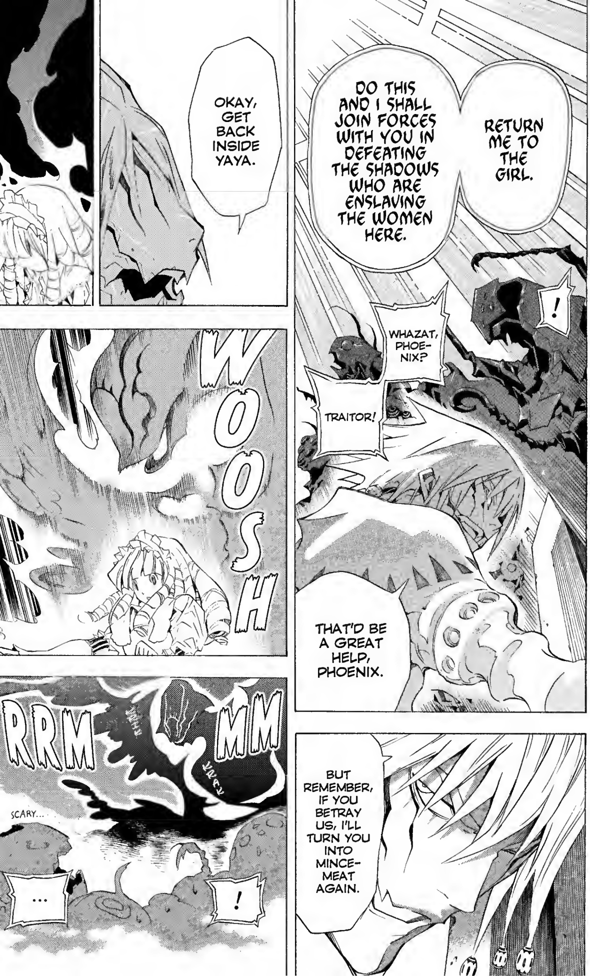

THIS IS BAD! IT'S ALMOST BACK TO ITS BIRD SHAPE!
IS IT GOING TO REGENERATE?!
AT THIS RATE, THEY'LL...
DAMN THAT MONSTER!
SLASH
!!

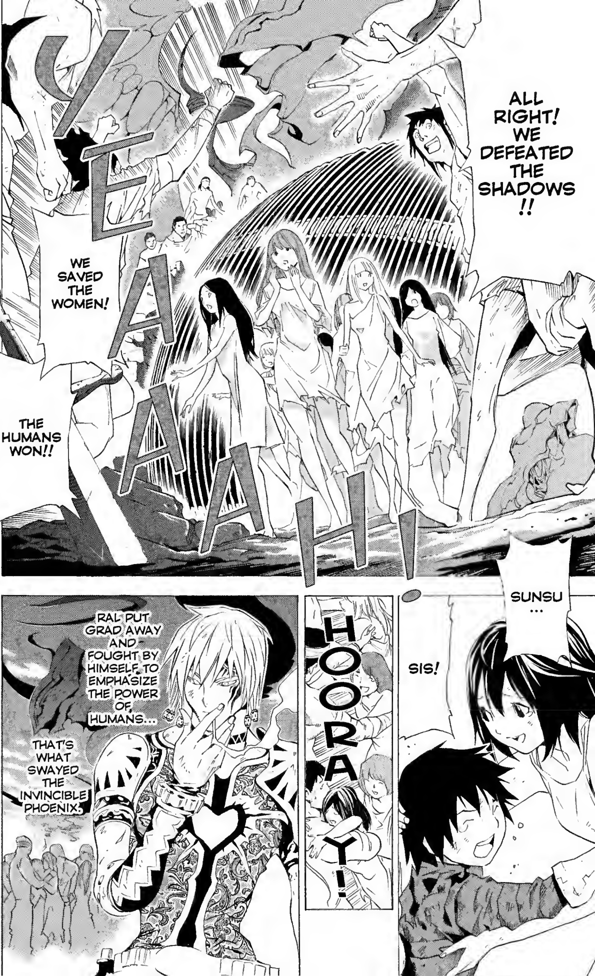

THE TIGER AND I WILL TAKE CARE OF THINGS HERE!
GO!
RIGHT!
DASH
STOP THE PIECES THAT ARE ABOUT TO CONJOIN!
JUST PULL IT APART!
DON'T LET GO!
THOSE WITH SHADOWS, LET YOUR SHADOW EAT THOSE PIECES!
IT'S THE FLESH OF AN IMMORTAL. IT CAN'T BE BAD FOR YOU!
MISS MIO! JUST LEAVE IT TO THE MEN!
NO!
I... I CAN DO MY PART TOO...

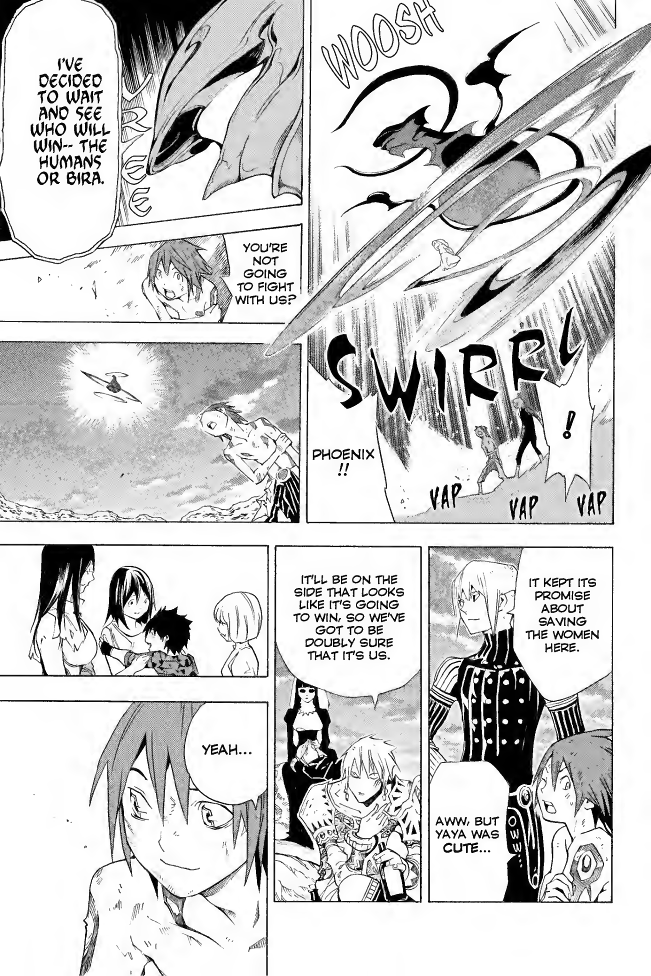

I'VE BEEN FIGHTING AGAINST THE SHADOWS TOO!
KLATTA
YOU CAN DO IT, EVERYONE!
IF EVERYONE JOINS TOGETHER, EVEN HUMANS CAN FIGHT AGAINST THE SHADOWS!
YEAH!
WE CAN DO IT!
FOOSH
!!
WHAT THE...?!
FWUP
FWUP
WHOA!
OW!
THUD THUD


ZZZM
H-HELP ME...
THE PHOENIX IS BACK! DO IT NOW, SENOL! ENGULF THAT KID IN DARKNESS!
WHAT? I CAN'T DO IT SO SUDDENLY!
TMP TMP TMP
DON'T PUT HER IN THE DARKNESS! IT'S TOO CRUEL!
DAMN YOU, RAL! THIS IS AN EMERGENCY!! WE DON'T HAVE ANY OTHER--
THE PHOENIX'S HEAD STILL ISN'T BACK.
AS LONG AS ITS HEAD ISN'T INSIDE HER, SHE SHOULD BE FINE.
RIGHT, MISS MIO?
YES. THE HEAD CONDUCTS ALL THOUGHT PROCESSES.
RIGHT NOW, HER BODY AND MIND CAN'T BE CONTROLLED.

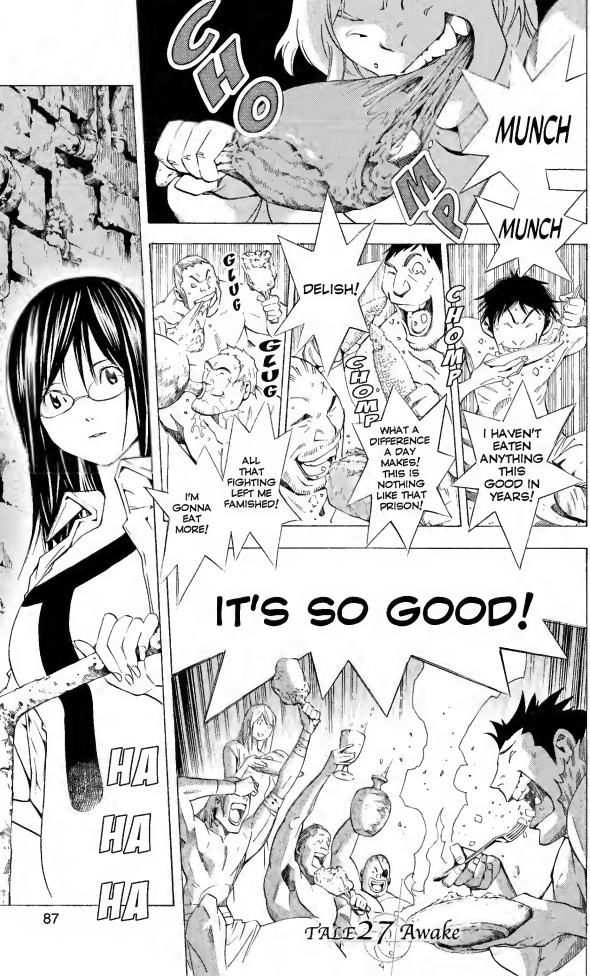

HUMANS.
!
THE PHOENIX SPEAKS!!
YOUR WISDOM, STRENGTH AND COURAGE...
...HAVE PROVEN STRONGER THAN I COULD EVER HAVE IMAGINED.
I WAS IMPRISONED INSIDE THAT GIRL BY BIRA...
...BUT I WILL BE BIRA'S SLAVE NO LONGER.
HEAR THAT? IT'S ADMITTING DEFEAT!
YEAH!
CAN WE TRUST IT, MISS MIO?
I DON'T KNOW...


RETURN ME TO THE GIRL.
DO THIS AND I SHALL JOIN FORCES WITH YOU IN DEFEATING THE SHADOWS WHO ARE ENSLAVING THE WOMEN HERE.
!
WHAZAT, PHOENIX?
TRAITOR!
THAT'D BE A GREAT HELP, PHOENIX.
BUT REMEMBER, IF YOU BETRAY US, I'LL TURN YOU INTO MINCEMEAT AGAIN.
OKAY, GET BACK INSIDE YAYA.
WOOSH
RRMMM
KRAK
SCARY...
!
...

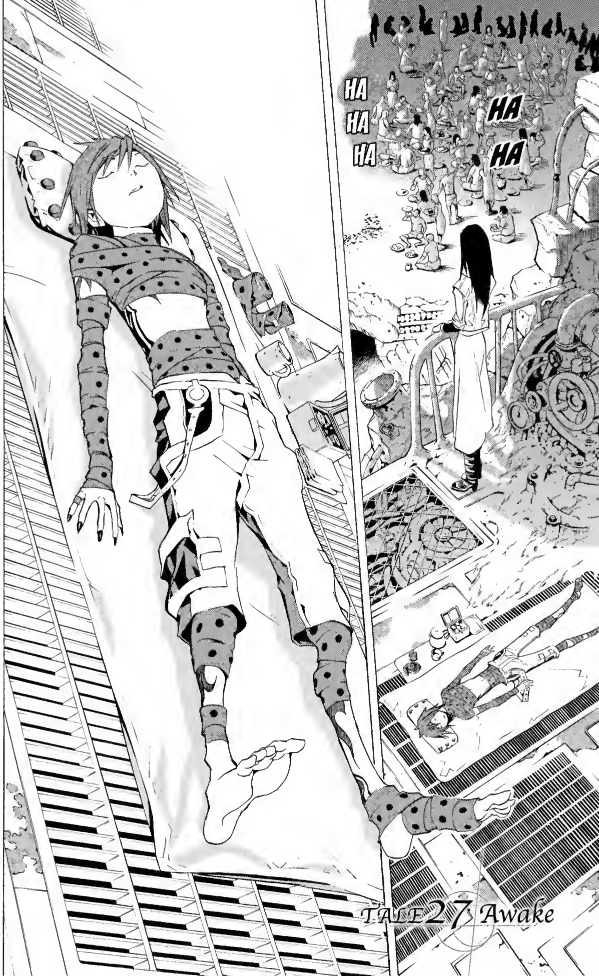

ALL RIGHT! WE DEFEATED THE SHADOWS!!
YEAAAAH!
WE SAVED THE WOMEN!
THE HUMANS WON!!
SUNSU ...
SIS!
HOORAY!
RAL PUT GRAD AWAY AND FOUGHT BY HIMSELF TO EMPHASIZE THE POWER OF HUMANS...
THAT'S WHAT SWAYED THE INVINCIBLE PHOENIX.


I'VE DECIDED TO WAIT AND SEE WHO WILL WIN-- THE HUMANS OR BIRA.
VREEE
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO FIGHT WITH US?
WOOSH
SWIRL
!
PHOENIX !!
VAP VAP VAP
IT KEPT ITS PROMISE ABOUT SAVING THE WOMEN HERE.
AWW, BUT YAYA WAS CUTE...
OWW...
IT'LL BE ON THE SIDE THAT LOOKS LIKE IT'S GOING TO WIN, SO WE'VE GOT TO BE DOUBLY SURE THAT IT'S US.
YEAH...

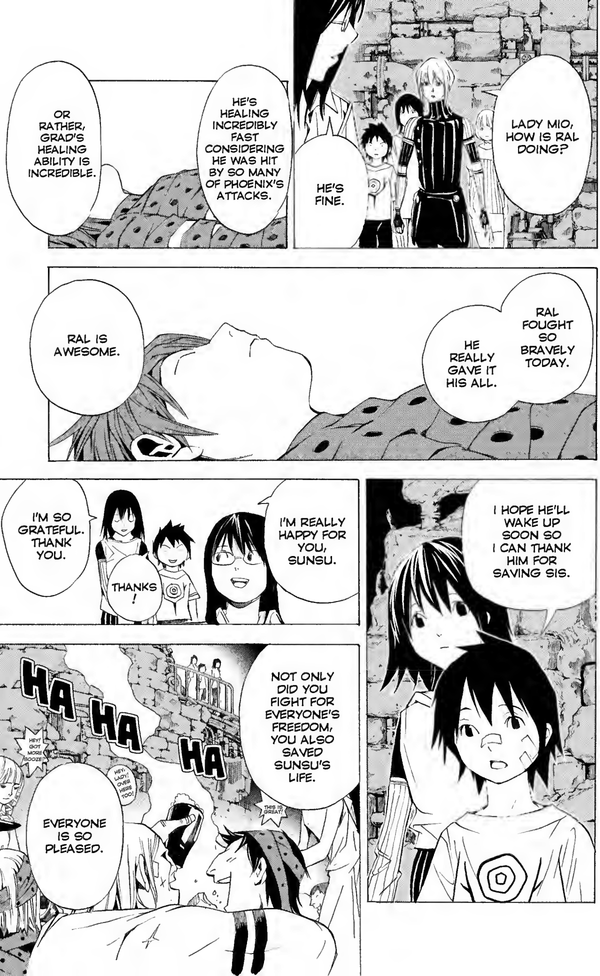
Ral Ω Grad

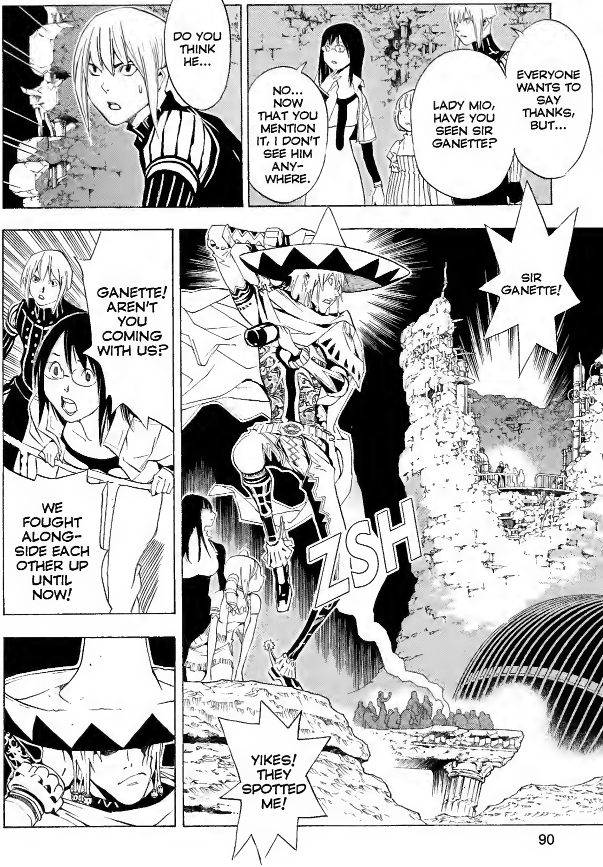

CHOMP
MUNCH
MUNCH
I HAVEN'T EATEN ANYTHING THIS GOOD IN YEARS!
CHOMP
DELISH!
WHAT A DIFFERENCE A DAY MAKES! THIS IS NOTHING LIKE THAT PRISON!
CHOMP
GLUG
GLUG
ALL THAT FIGHTING LEFT ME FAMISHED!
I'M GONNA EAT MORE!
IT'S SO GOOD!
HA HA HA

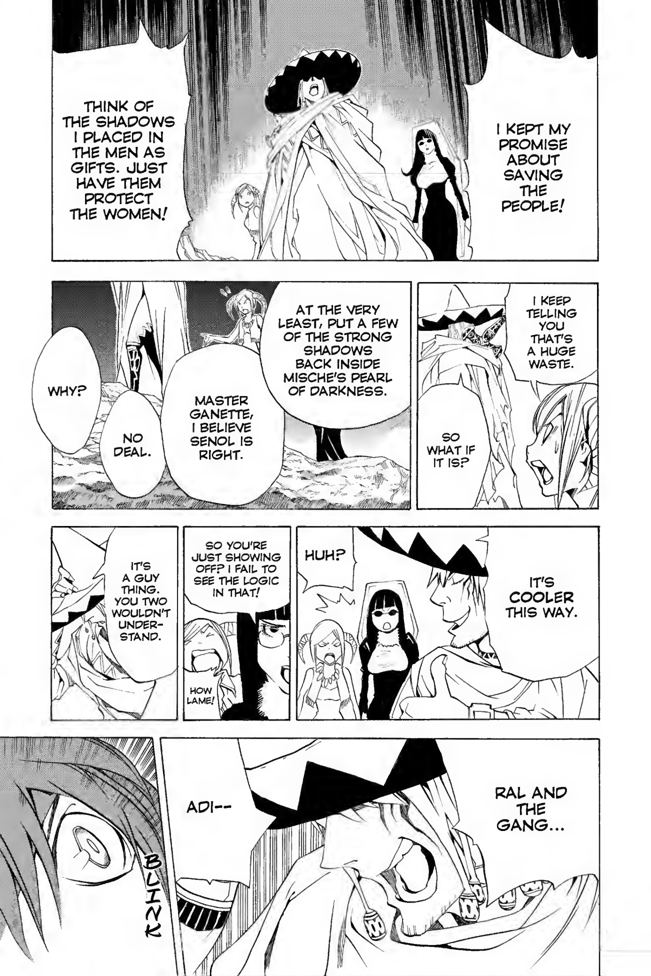
TALE 27 Awake

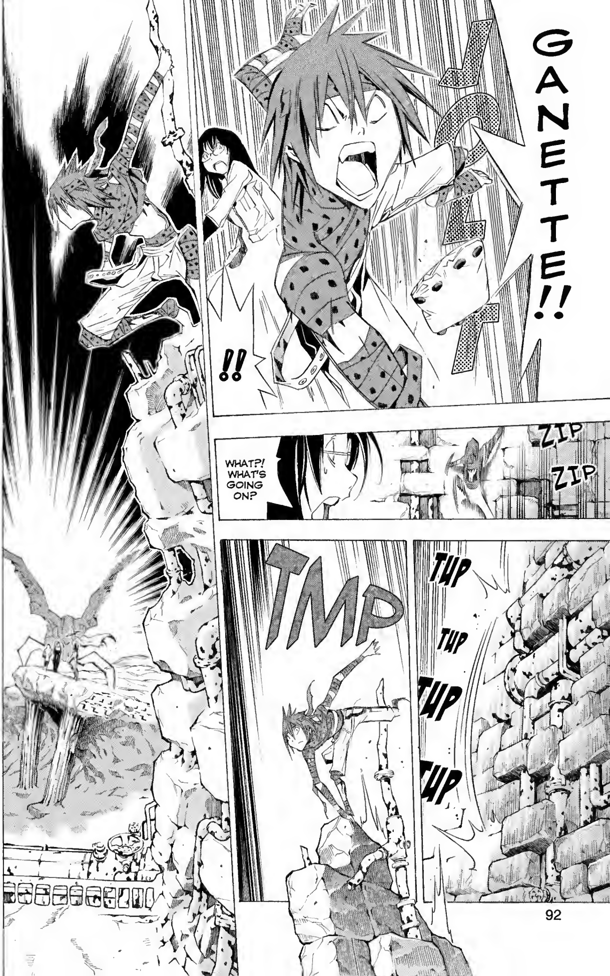

HA
HA
HA
HA
HA

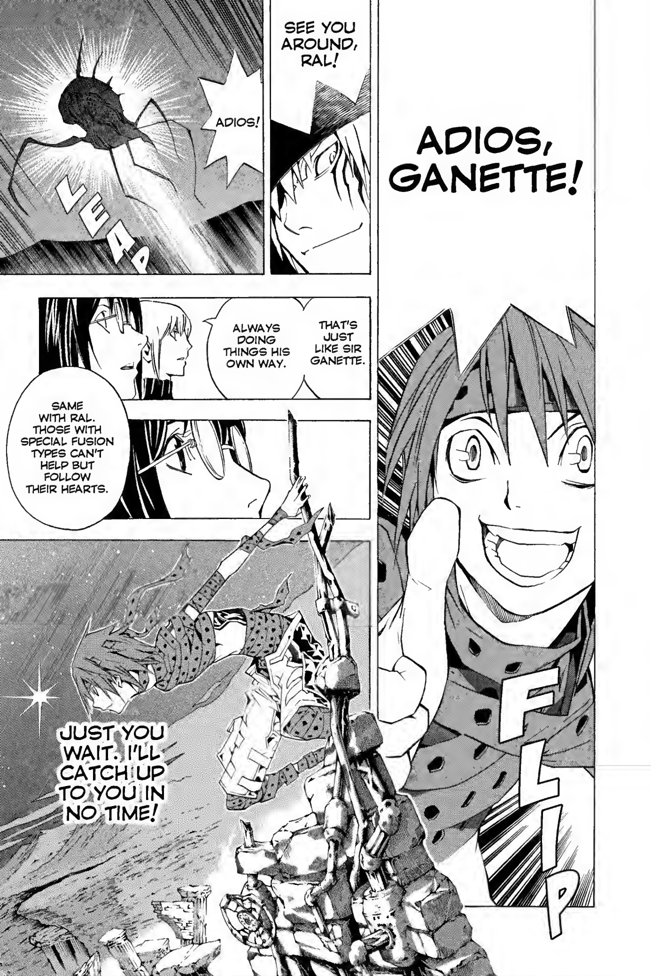
TALE 27 Awake

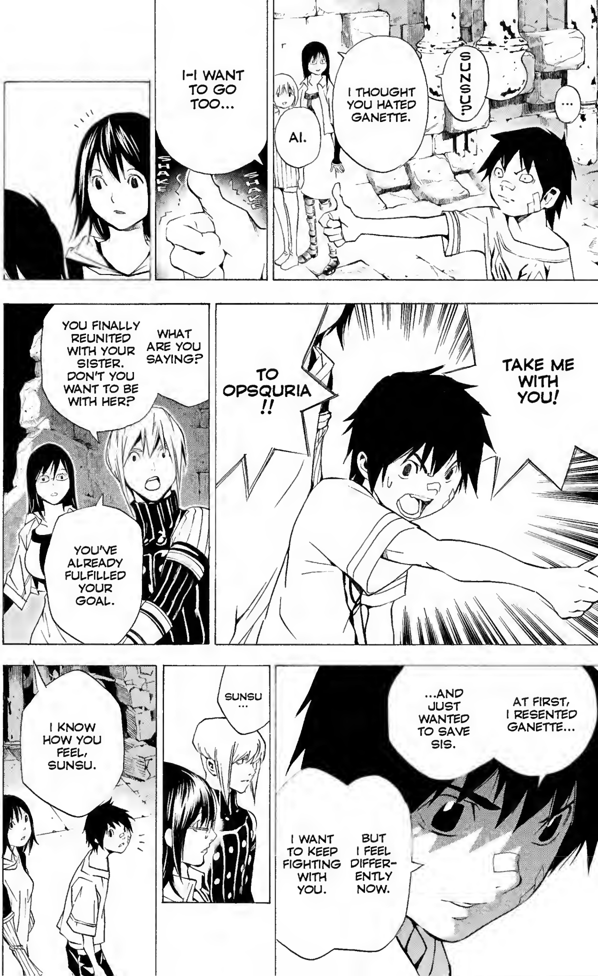

LADY MIO, HOW IS RAL DOING?
HE'S FINE.
HE'S HEALING INCREDIBLY FAST CONSIDERING HE WAS HIT BY SO MANY OF PHOENIX'S ATTACKS.
OR RATHER, GRAD'S HEALING ABILITY IS INCREDIBLE.
RAL FOUGHT SO BRAVELY TODAY.
HE REALLY GAVE IT HIS ALL.
RAL IS AWESOME.
I HOPE HE'LL WAKE UP SOON SO I CAN THANK HIM FOR SAVING SIS.
I'M REALLY HAPPY FOR YOU, SUNSU.
THANKS!
I'M SO GRATEFUL. THANK YOU.
NOT ONLY DID YOU FIGHT FOR EVERYONE'S FREEDOM, YOU ALSO SAVED SUNSU'S LIFE.
HA HA HA
THIS IS GREAT!
HEY, LADY! OVER HERE TOO!
HEY! GOT MORE BOOZE?
EVERYONE IS SO PLEASED.

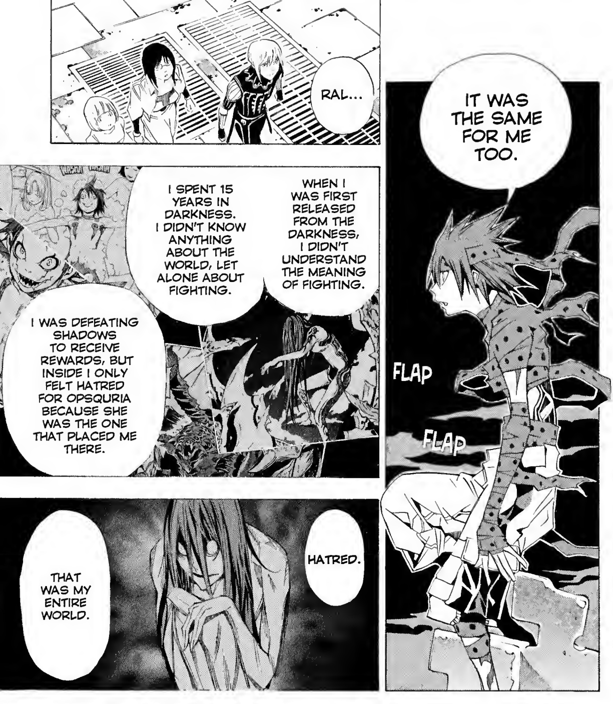

EVERYONE WANTS TO SAY THANKS, BUT...
LADY MIO, HAVE YOU SEEN SIR GANETTE?
NO... NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, I DON'T SEE HIM ANYWHERE.
DO YOU THINK HE...
SIR GANETTE!
GANETTE! AREN'T YOU COMING WITH US?
WE FOUGHT ALONGSIDE EACH OTHER UP UNTIL NOW!
ZSH
YIKES! THEY SPOTTED ME!

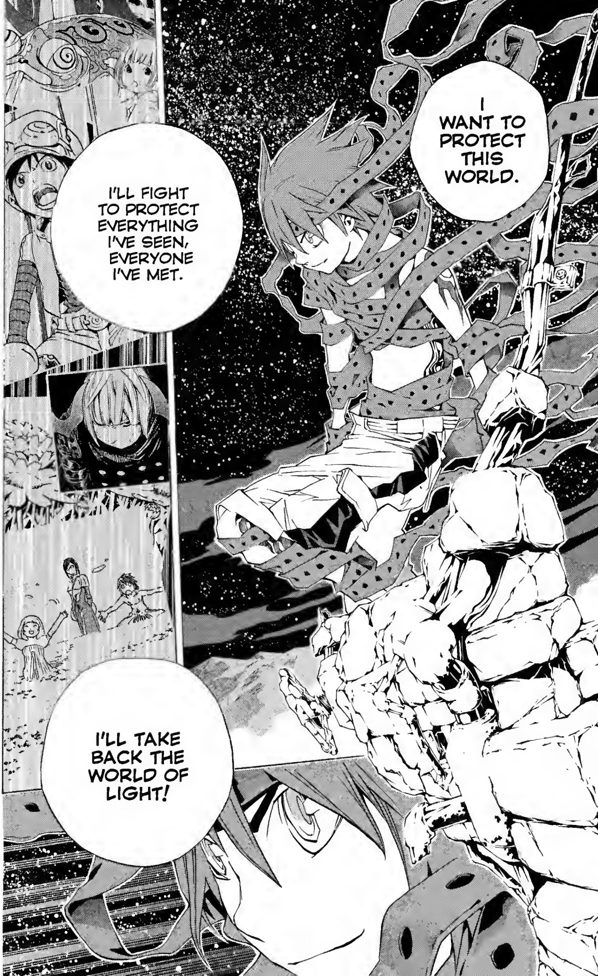

I KEPT MY PROMISE ABOUT SAVING THE PEOPLE!
THINK OF THE SHADOWS I PLACED IN THE MEN AS GIFTS. JUST HAVE THEM PROTECT THE WOMEN!
I KEEP TELLING YOU THAT'S A HUGE WASTE.
SO WHAT IF IT IS?
AT THE VERY LEAST, PUT A FEW OF THE STRONG SHADOWS BACK INSIDE MISCHE'S PEARL OF DARKNESS.
MASTER GANETTE, I BELIEVE SENOL IS RIGHT.
NO DEAL.
WHY?
IT'S COOLER THIS WAY.
HUH?
SO YOU'RE JUST SHOWING OFF? I FAIL TO SEE THE LOGIC IN THAT!
HOW LAME!
IT'S A GUY THING. YOU TWO WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND.
RAL AND THE GANG...
ADI--
BLINK


GANETTE!!
JOLT
!!
ZIP
ZIP
WHAT?! WHAT'S GOING ON?
TUP
TUP
TUP
TUP
TMP

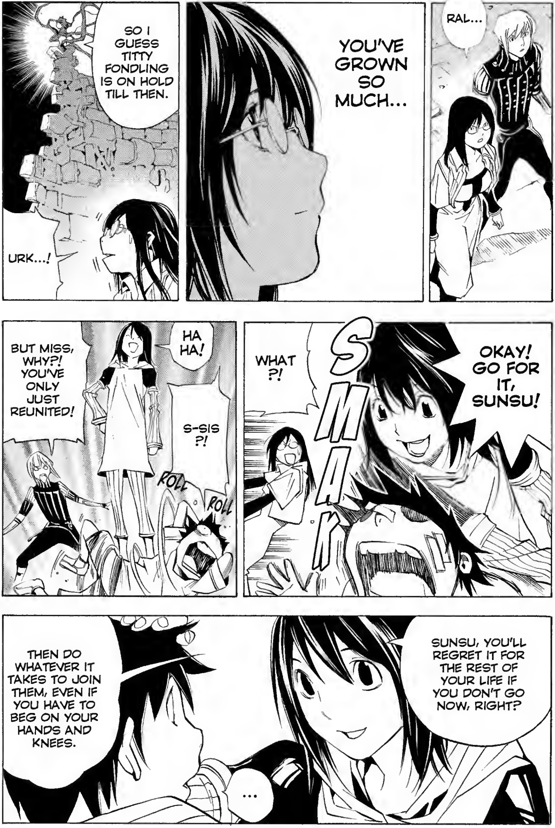

SEE YOU AROUND, RAL!
ADIOS!
LEAP
ADIOS, GANETTE!
FLIP
THAT'S JUST LIKE SIR GANETTE.
ALWAYS DOING THINGS HIS OWN WAY.
SAME WITH RAL. THOSE WITH SPECIAL FUSION TYPES CAN'T HELP BUT FOLLOW THEIR HEARTS.
JUST YOU WAIT. I'LL CATCH UP TO YOU IN NO TIME!

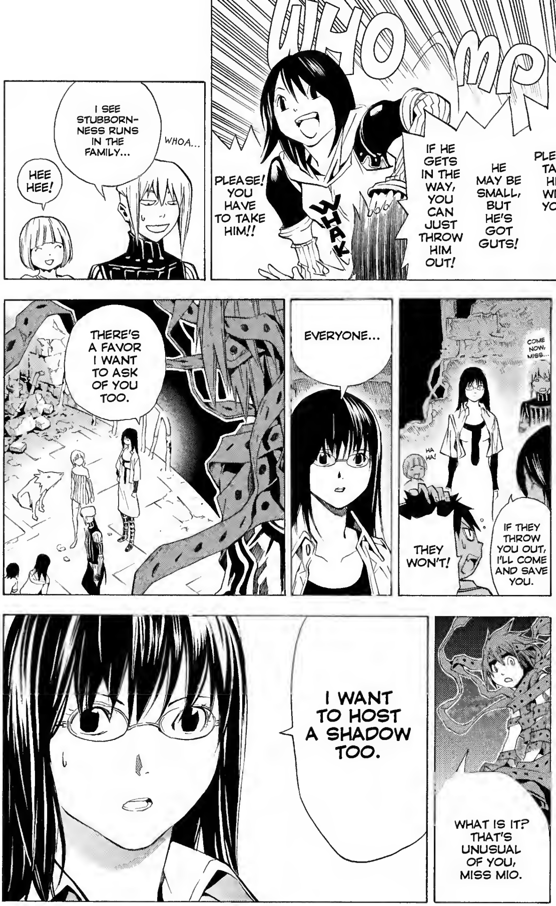

...
SUNSU?
I THOUGHT YOU HATED GANETTE.
AI.
I-I WANT TO GO TOO...
SHAKE
SHAKE
TAKE ME WITH YOU!
TO OPSQURIA!!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
YOU FINALLY REUNITED WITH YOUR SISTER. DON'T YOU WANT TO BE WITH HER?
YOU'VE ALREADY FULFILLED YOUR GOAL.
AT FIRST, I RESENTED GANETTE...
...AND JUST WANTED TO SAVE SIS.
BUT I FEEL DIFFERENTLY NOW.
I WANT TO KEEP FIGHTING WITH YOU.
SUNSU...
I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL, SUNSU.

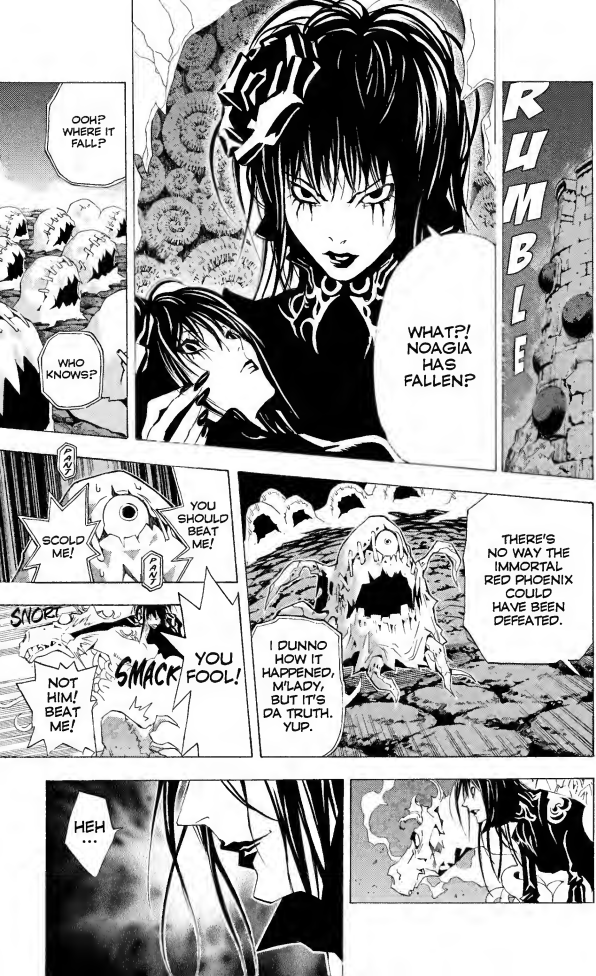

RAL...
IT WAS THE SAME FOR ME TOO.
WHEN I WAS FIRST RELEASED FROM THE DARKNESS, I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF FIGHTING.
I SPENT 15 YEARS IN DARKNESS. I DIDN'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THE WORLD, LET ALONE ABOUT FIGHTING.
I WAS DEFEATING SHADOWS TO RECEIVE REWARDS, BUT INSIDE I ONLY FELT HATRED FOR OPSQURIA BECAUSE SHE WAS THE ONE THAT PLACED ME THERE.
FLAP
FLAP
HATRED.
THAT WAS MY ENTIRE WORLD.
BUT IT'S DIFFERENT NOW.
FLAP FLAP
I GOT TO KNOW A NEW WORLD BY FIGHTING ALONGSIDE EVERYONE.

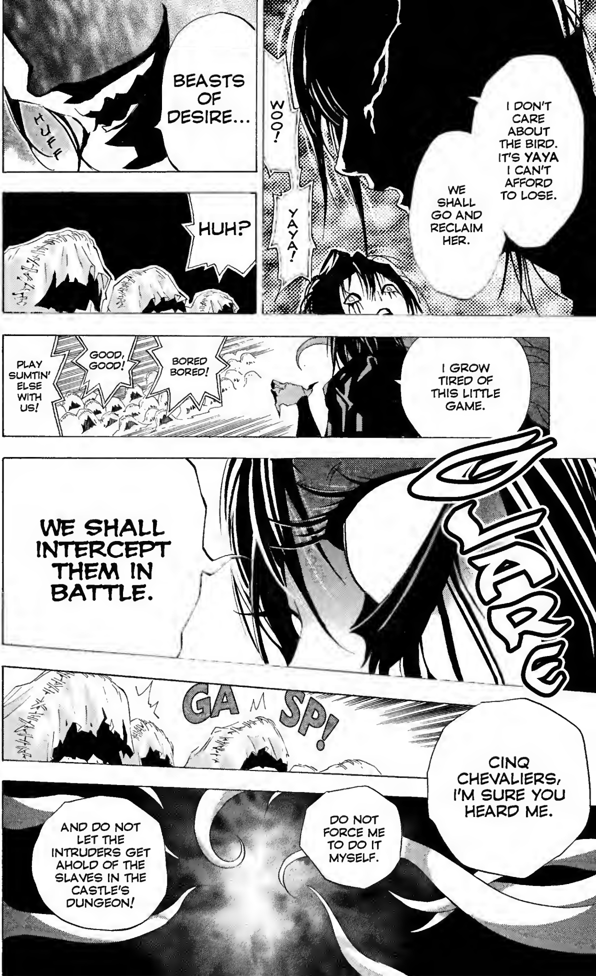

I WANT TO PROTECT THIS WORLD.
I'LL FIGHT TO PROTECT EVERYTHING I'VE SEEN, EVERYONE I'VE MET.
I'LL TAKE BACK THE WORLD OF LIGHT!

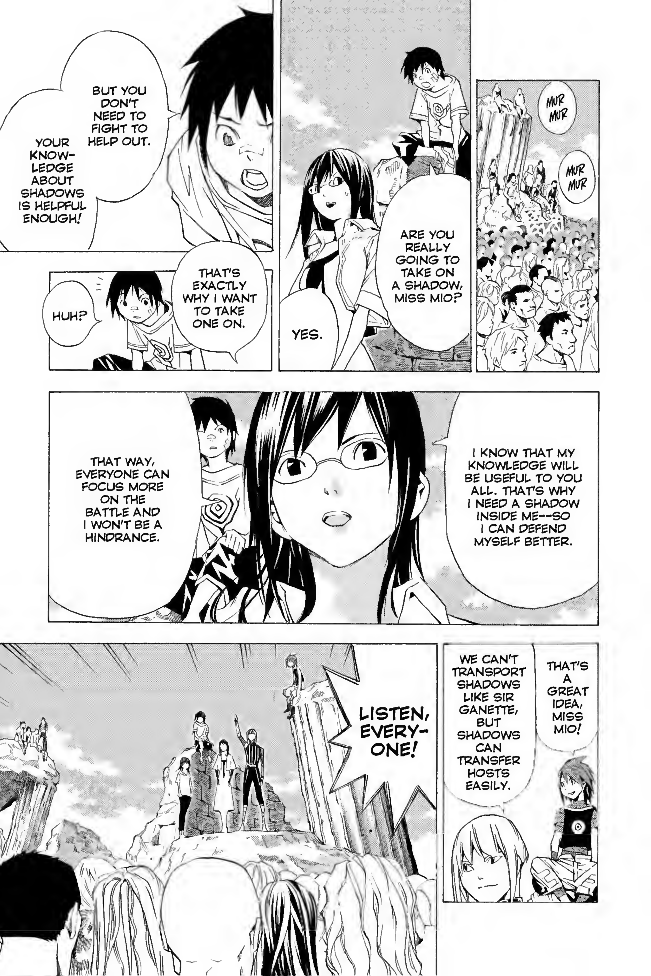
READ THIS WAY

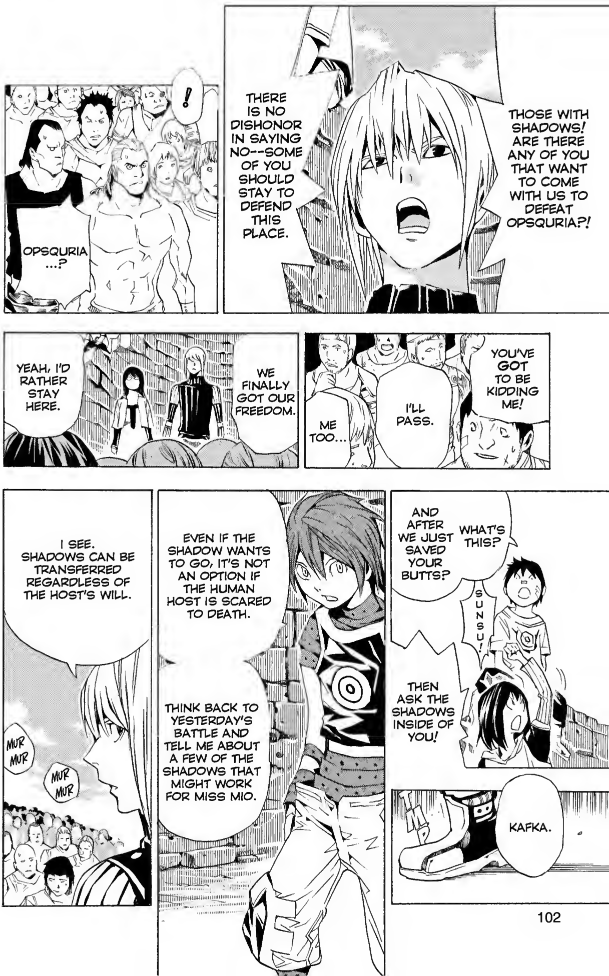

RAL...
YOU'VE GROWN SO MUCH...
SO I GUESS TITTY FONDLING IS ON HOLD TILL THEN.
URK...!
OKAY! GO FOR IT, SUNSU!
SMAK
WHAT?!
HA HA!
S-SIS?!
BUT MISS, WHY?! YOU'VE ONLY JUST REUNITED!
ROLL
ROLL
SUNSU, YOU'LL REGRET IT FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE IF YOU DON'T GO NOW, RIGHT?
THEN DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO JOIN THEM, EVEN IF YOU HAVE TO BEG ON YOUR HANDS AND KNEES.
...

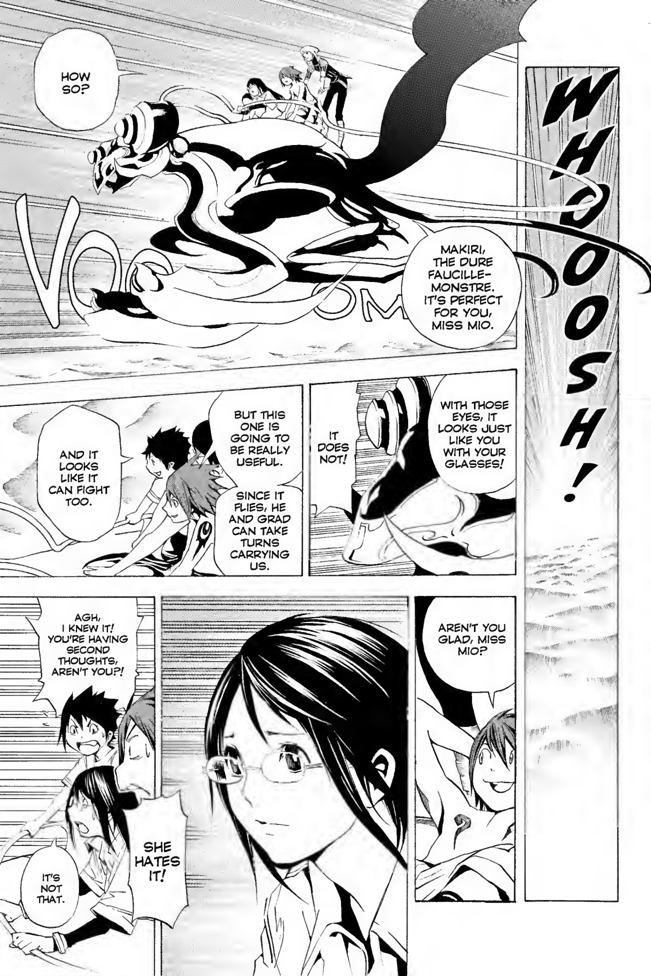

WHOMP
PLEASE TAKE HIM WITH YOU!
HE MAY BE SMALL, BUT HE'S GOT GUTS!
IF HE GETS IN THE WAY, YOU CAN JUST THROW HIM OUT!
PLEASE! YOU HAVE TO TAKE HIM!!
WHAK
WHOA...
I SEE STUBBORNNESS RUNS IN THE FAMILY...
HEE HEE!
COME NOW, MISS...
HA HA!
IF THEY THROW YOU OUT, I'LL COME AND SAVE YOU.
THEY WON'T!
EVERYONE...
THERE'S A FAVOR I WANT TO ASK OF YOU TOO.
WHAT IS IT? THAT'S UNUSUAL OF YOU, MISS MIO.
I WANT TO HOST A SHADOW TOO.

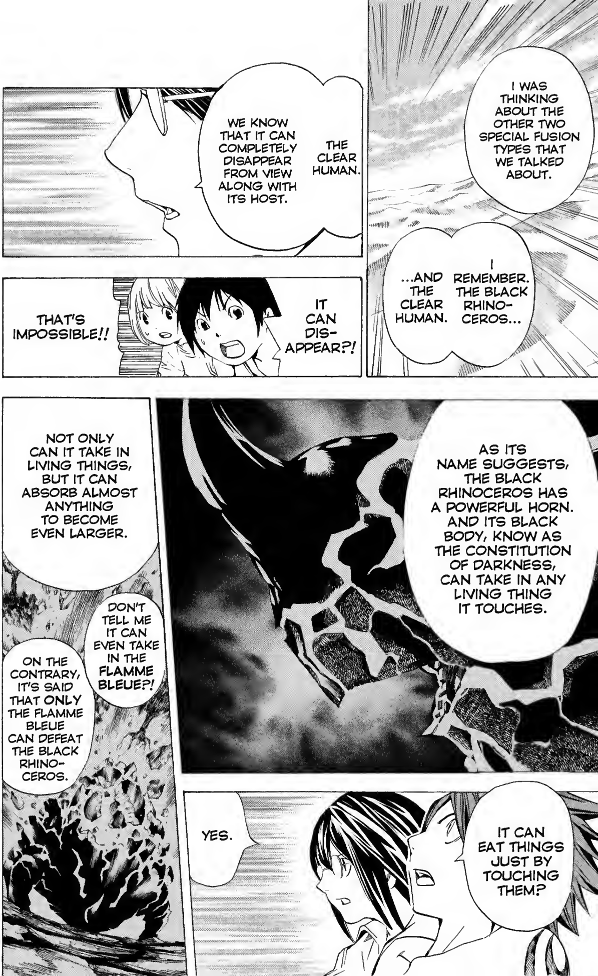

RUMBLE
WHAT?! NOAGIA HAS FALLEN?
OOH? WHERE IT FALL?
WHO KNOWS?
THERE'S NO WAY THE IMMORTAL RED PHOENIX COULD HAVE BEEN DEFEATED.
I DUNNO HOW IT HAPPENED, M'LADY, BUT IT'S DA TRUTH. YUP.
PANT
YOU SHOULD BEAT ME!
SCOLD ME!
PANT
YOU FOOL!
SMACK
SNORT
NOT HIM! BEAT ME!
HEH ...

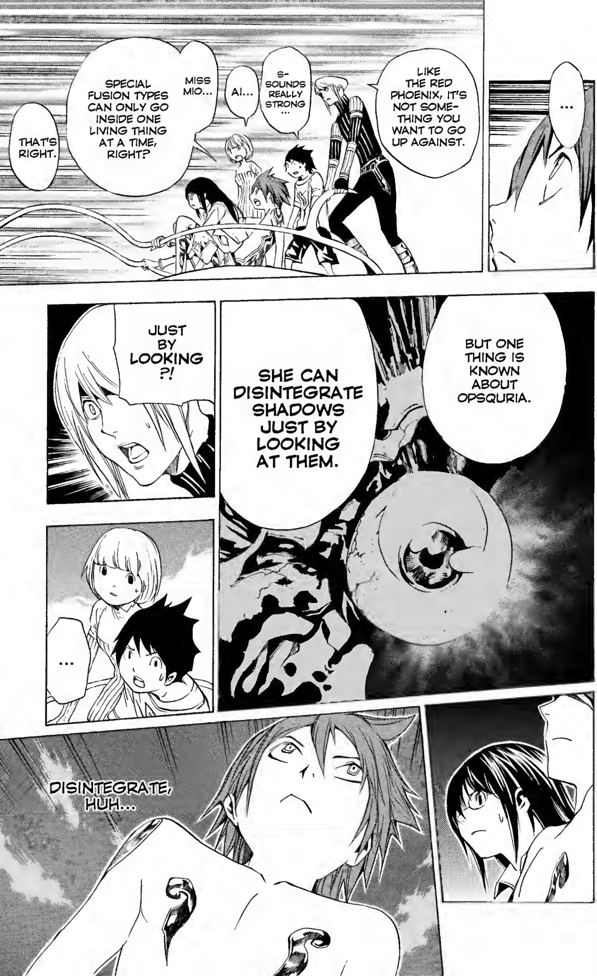

WOO!
YAYA!
I DON'T CARE ABOUT THE BIRD. IT'S YAYA I CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE.
WE SHALL GO AND RECLAIM HER.
BEASTS OF DESIRE...
HUFF
HUH?
I GROW TIRED OF THIS LITTLE GAME.
BORED BORED!
GOOD, GOOD!
PLAY SUMTIN' ELSE WITH US!
GUARE
WE SHALL INTERCEPT THEM IN BATTLE.
GASP!
CINQ CHEVALIERS, I'M SURE YOU HEARD ME.
DO NOT FORCE ME TO DO IT MYSELF.
AND DO NOT LET THE INTRUDERS GET AHOLD OF THE SLAVES IN THE CASTLE'S DUNGEON!


MUR MUR
MUR MUR
ARE YOU REALLY GOING TO TAKE ON A SHADOW, MISS MIO?
YES.
BUT YOU DON'T NEED TO FIGHT TO HELP OUT.
YOUR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT SHADOWS IS HELPFUL ENOUGH!
THAT'S EXACTLY WHY I WANT TO TAKE ONE ON.
HUH?
I KNOW THAT MY KNOWLEDGE WILL BE USEFUL TO YOU ALL. THAT'S WHY I NEED A SHADOW INSIDE ME--SO I CAN DEFEND MYSELF BETTER.
THAT WAY, EVERYONE CAN FOCUS MORE ON THE BATTLE AND I WON'T BE A HINDRANCE.
THAT'S A GREAT IDEA, MISS MIO!
WE CAN'T TRANSPORT SHADOWS LIKE SIR GANETTE, BUT SHADOWS CAN TRANSFER HOSTS EASILY.
LISTEN, EVERYONE!


THOSE WITH SHADOWS! ARE THERE ANY OF YOU THAT WANT TO COME WITH US TO DEFEAT OPSQURIA?!
THERE IS NO DISHONOR IN SAYING NO--SOME OF YOU SHOULD STAY TO DEFEND THIS PLACE.
!
OPSQURIA ...?
YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME!
I'LL PASS.
ME TOO...
WE FINALLY GOT OUR FREEDOM.
YEAH, I'D RATHER STAY HERE.
WHAT'S THIS?
AND AFTER WE JUST SAVED YOUR BUTTS?
SUNSU!
THEN ASK THE SHADOWS INSIDE OF YOU!
KAFKA.
EVEN IF THE SHADOW WANTS TO GO, IT'S NOT AN OPTION IF THE HUMAN HOST IS SCARED TO DEATH.
THINK BACK TO YESTERDAY'S BATTLE AND TELL ME ABOUT A FEW OF THE SHADOWS THAT MIGHT WORK FOR MISS MIO.
I SEE. SHADOWS CAN BE TRANSFERRED REGARDLESS OF THE HOST'S WILL.
MUR MUR
MUR MUR

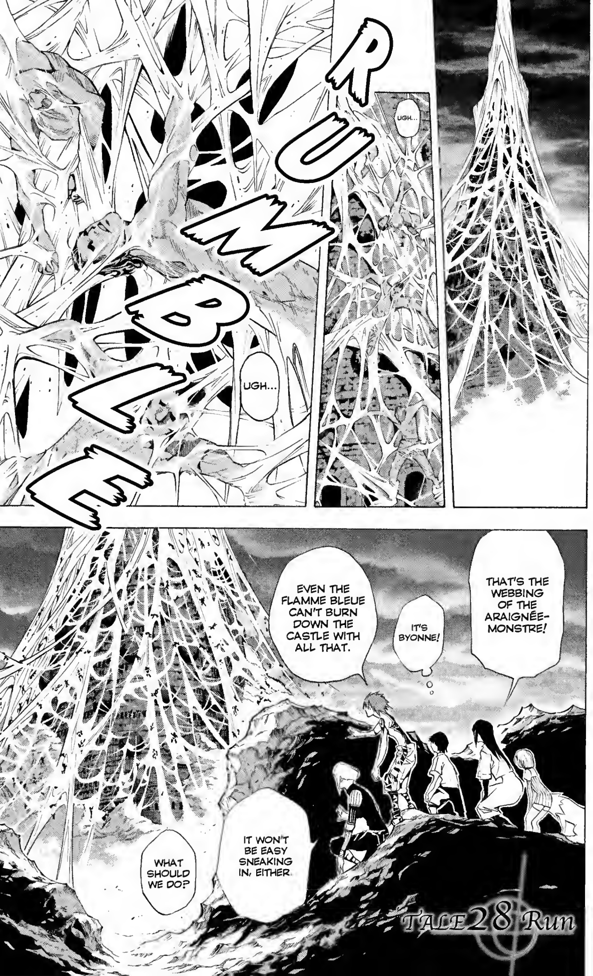

WHOOOOOSH!
HOW SO?
VOOOOM
MAKIRI, THE DURE FAUCILLE-MONSTRE. IT'S PERFECT FOR YOU, MISS MIO.
WITH THOSE EYES, IT LOOKS JUST LIKE YOU WITH YOUR GLASSES!
IT DOES NOT!
BUT THIS ONE IS GOING TO BE REALLY USEFUL.
SINCE IT FLIES, HE AND GRAD CAN TAKE TURNS CARRYING US.
AND IT LOOKS LIKE IT CAN FIGHT TOO.
AREN'T YOU GLAD, MISS MIO?
AGH, I KNEW IT! YOU'RE HAVING SECOND THOUGHTS, AREN'T YOU?!
SHE HATES IT!
IT'S NOT THAT.

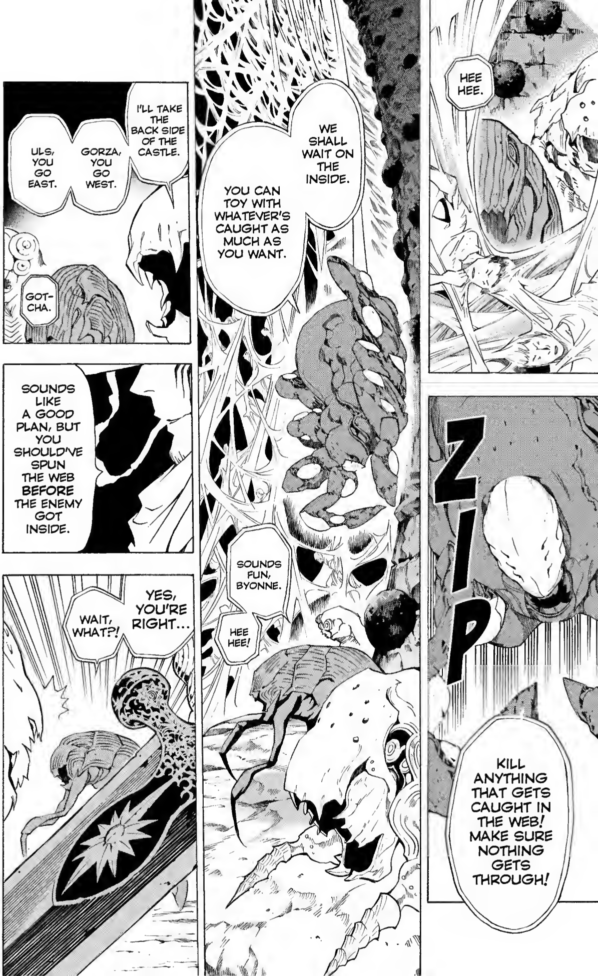

I WAS THINKING ABOUT THE OTHER TWO SPECIAL FUSION TYPES THAT WE TALKED ABOUT.
I REMEMBER. THE BLACK RHINOCEROS...
...AND THE CLEAR HUMAN.
THE CLEAR HUMAN.
WE KNOW THAT IT CAN COMPLETELY DISAPPEAR FROM VIEW ALONG WITH ITS HOST.
IT CAN DISAPPEAR?!
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!!
AS ITS NAME SUGGESTS, THE BLACK RHINOCEROS HAS A POWERFUL HORN. AND ITS BLACK BODY, KNOW AS THE CONSTITUTION OF DARKNESS, CAN TAKE IN ANY LIVING THING IT TOUCHES.
NOT ONLY CAN IT TAKE IN LIVING THINGS, BUT IT CAN ABSORB ALMOST ANYTHING TO BECOME EVEN LARGER.
IT CAN EAT THINGS JUST BY TOUCHING THEM?
YES.
DON'T TELL ME IT CAN EVEN TAKE IN THE FLAMME BLEUE?!
ON THE CONTRARY, IT'S SAID THAT ONLY THE FLAMME BLEUE CAN DEFEAT THE BLACK RHINOCEROS.

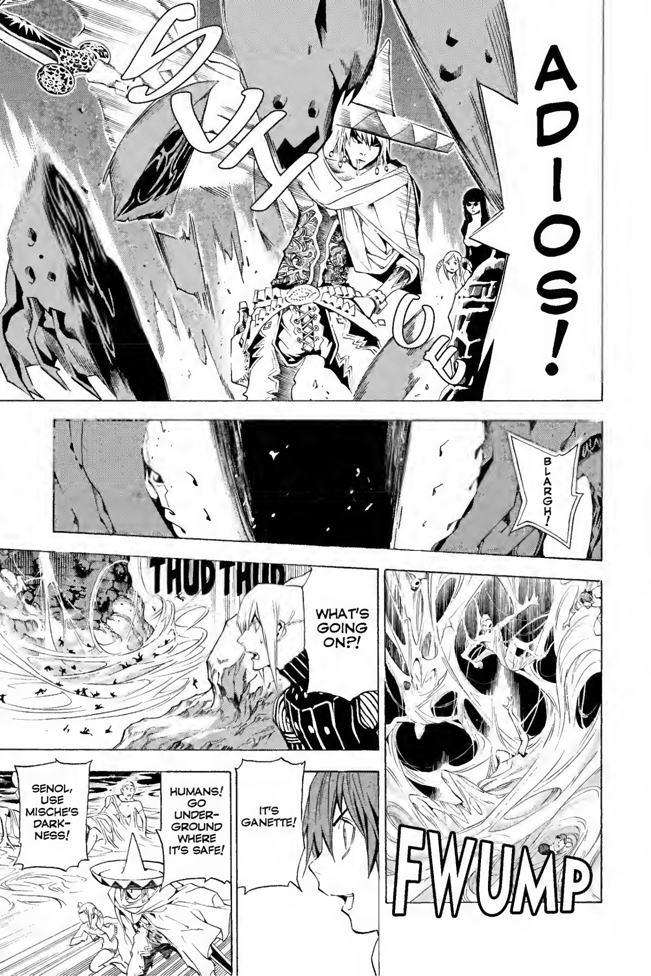

...
LIKE THE RED PHOENIX, IT'S NOT SOMETHING YOU WANT TO GO UP AGAINST.
S-SOUNDS REALLY STRONG...
AI...
MISS MIO...
SPECIAL FUSION TYPES CAN ONLY GO INSIDE ONE LIVING THING AT A TIME, RIGHT?
THAT'S RIGHT.
BUT ONE THING IS KNOWN ABOUT OPSQURIA.
SHE CAN DISINTEGRATE SHADOWS JUST BY LOOKING AT THEM.
JUST BY LOOKING?!
...
DISINTEGRATE, HUH...

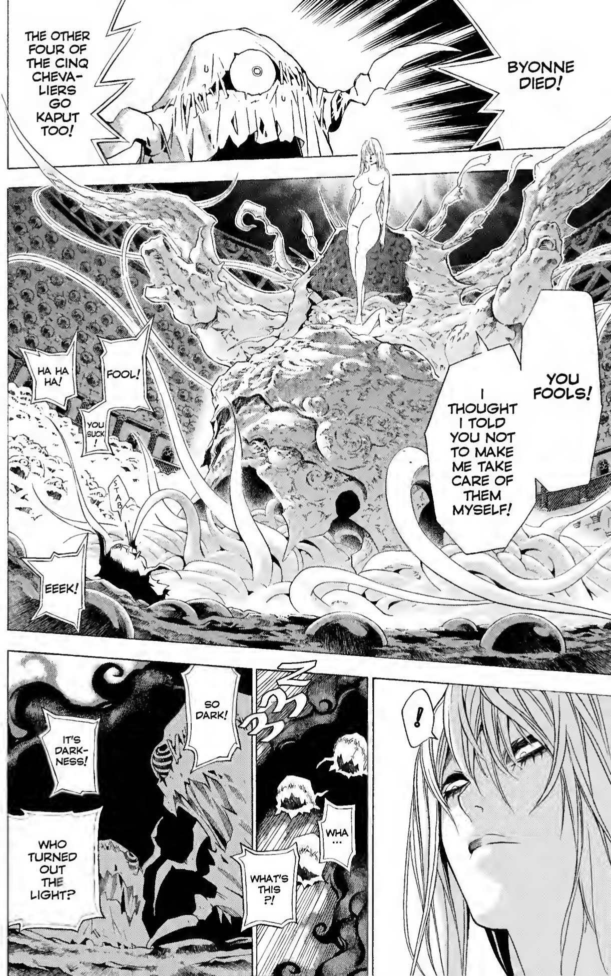
Ral Ω Grad

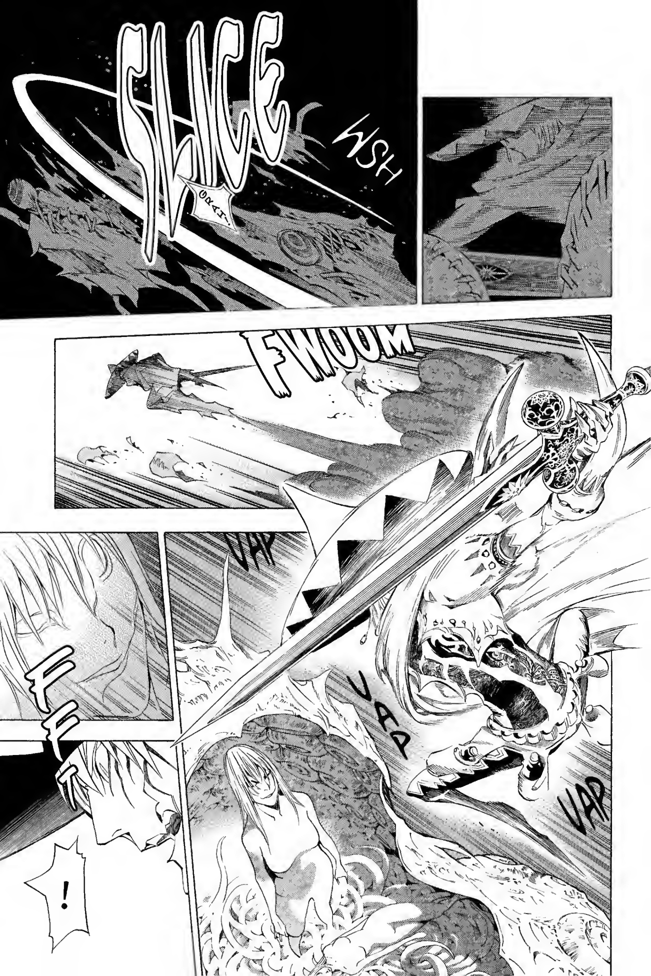
TALE 28 Run

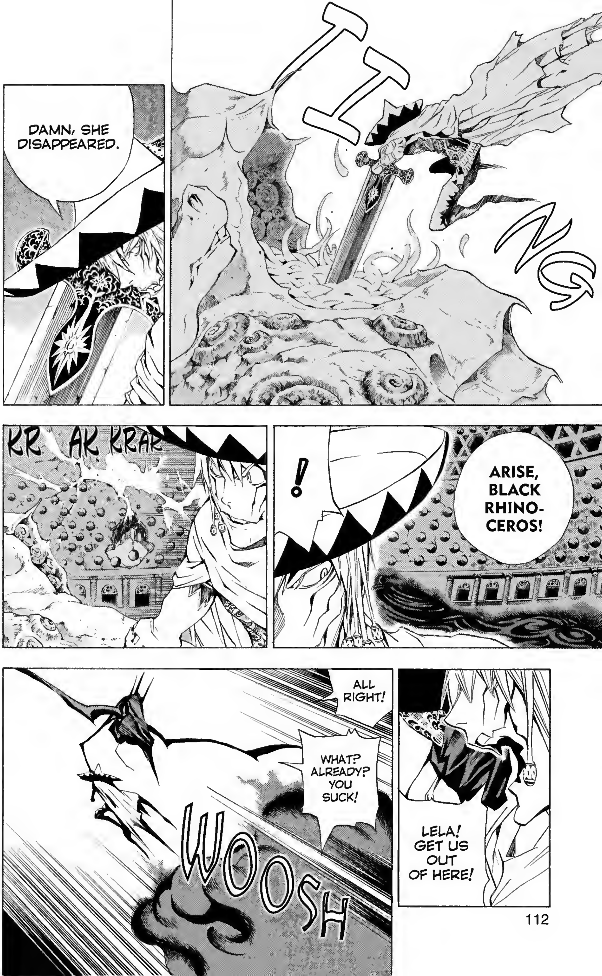

UGH...
UGH...
RUMBLE
THAT'S THE WEBBING OF THE ARAIGNÉE-MONSTRE!
IT'S BYONNE!
EVEN THE FLAMME BLEUE CAN'T BURN DOWN THE CASTLE WITH ALL THAT.
IT WON'T BE EASY SNEAKING IN, EITHER.
WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

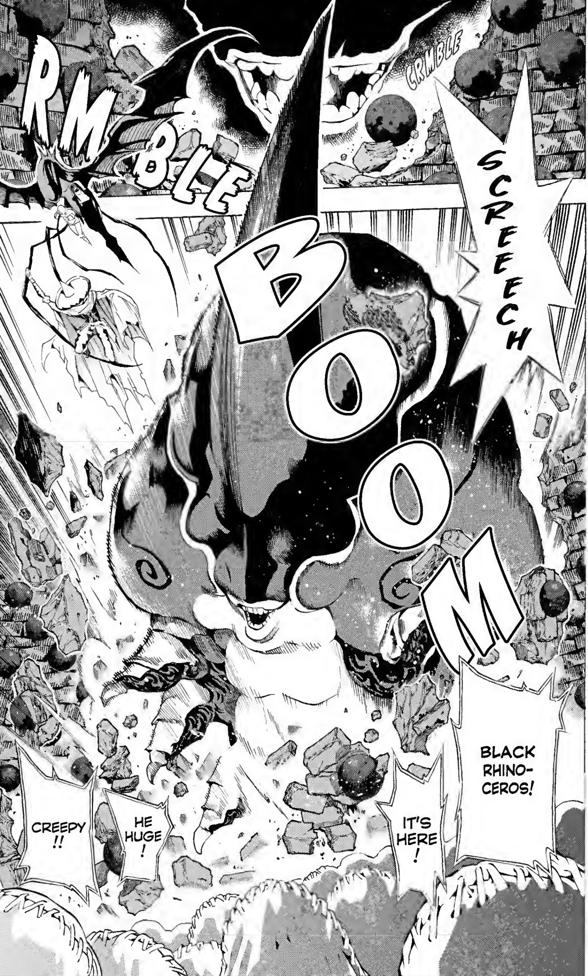

HEE HEE.
ZIP
KILL ANYTHING THAT GETS CAUGHT IN THE WEB! MAKE SURE NOTHING GETS THROUGH!
WE SHALL WAIT ON THE INSIDE.
YOU CAN TOY WITH WHATEVER'S CAUGHT AS MUCH AS YOU WANT.
SOUNDS FUN, BYONNE.
HEE HEE!
I'LL TAKE THE BACK SIDE OF THE CASTLE.
GORZA, YOU GO WEST.
ULS, YOU GO EAST.
GOT-CHA.
SOUNDS LIKE A GOOD PLAN, BUT YOU SHOULD'VE SPUN THE WEB BEFORE THE ENEMY GOT INSIDE.
YES, YOU'RE RIGHT...
WAIT, WHAT?!

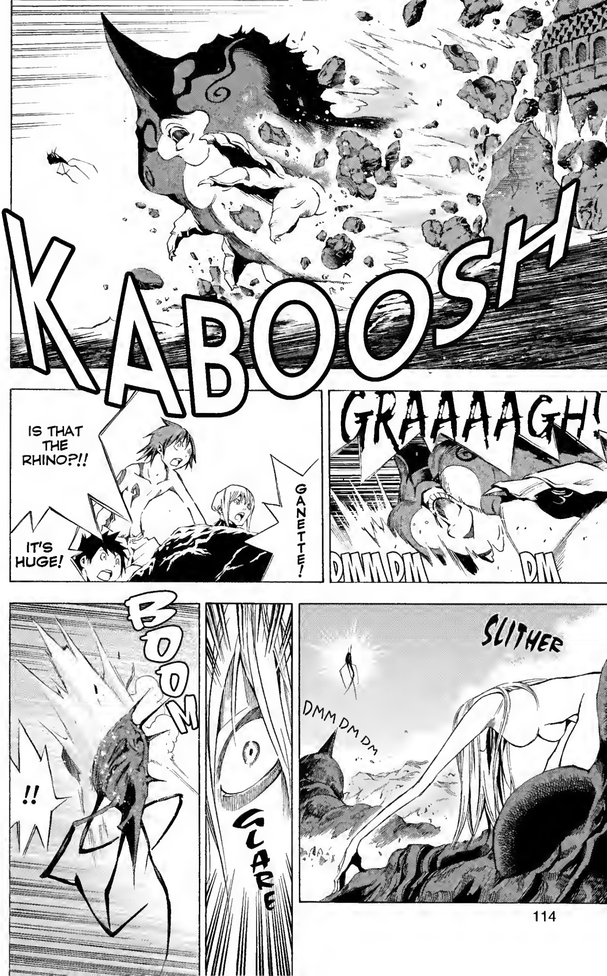

ADIOS!
BLARGH!
FWUMP
THUD THUD
WHAT'S GOING ON?!
IT'S GANETTE!
HUMANS! GO UNDERGROUND WHERE IT'S SAFE!
SENOL, USE MISCHE'S DARKNESS!

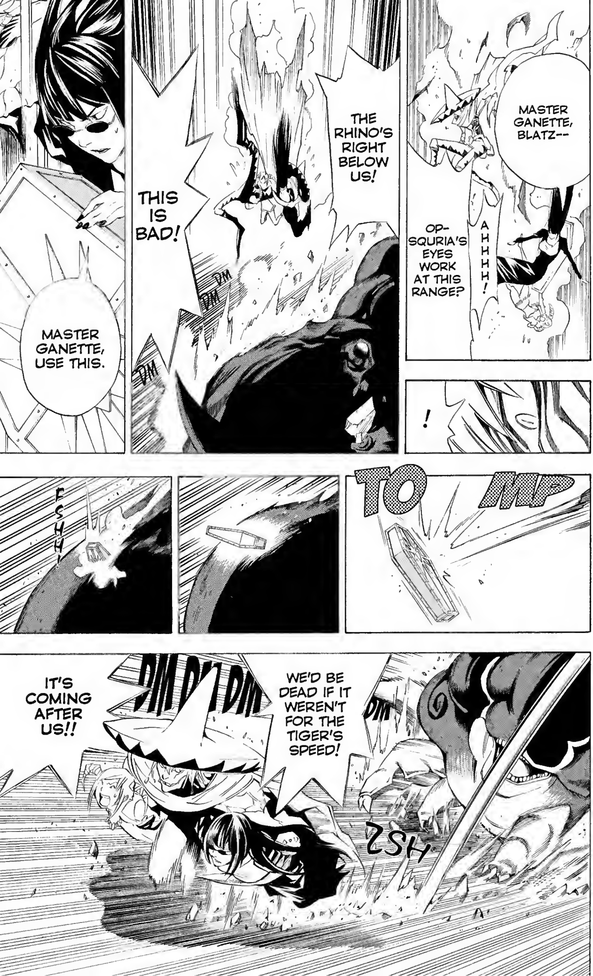

BYONNE DIED!
THE OTHER FOUR OF THE CINQ CHEVALIERS GO KAPUT TOO!
YOU FOOLS!
I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU NOT TO MAKE ME TAKE CARE OF THEM MYSELF!
FOOL!
HA HA HA!
YOU SUCK!
STAB
EEEK!
!
WHA...
WHAT'S THIS?!
SO DARK!
IT'S DARKNESS!
WHO TURNED OUT THE LIGHT?

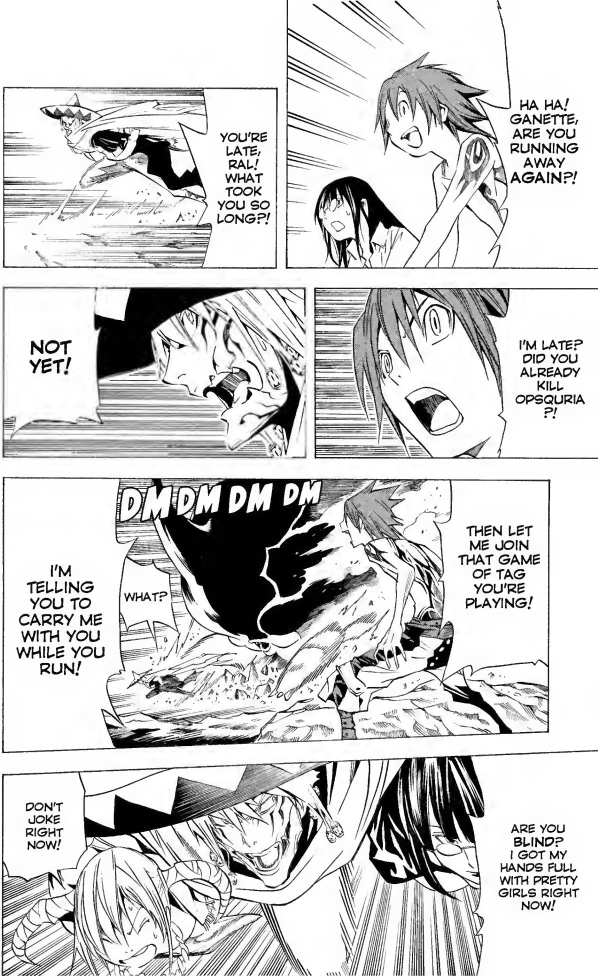

WSH
SLICE
GRAT...
FWOOM
VAP
VAAP
VAP
FFT
!

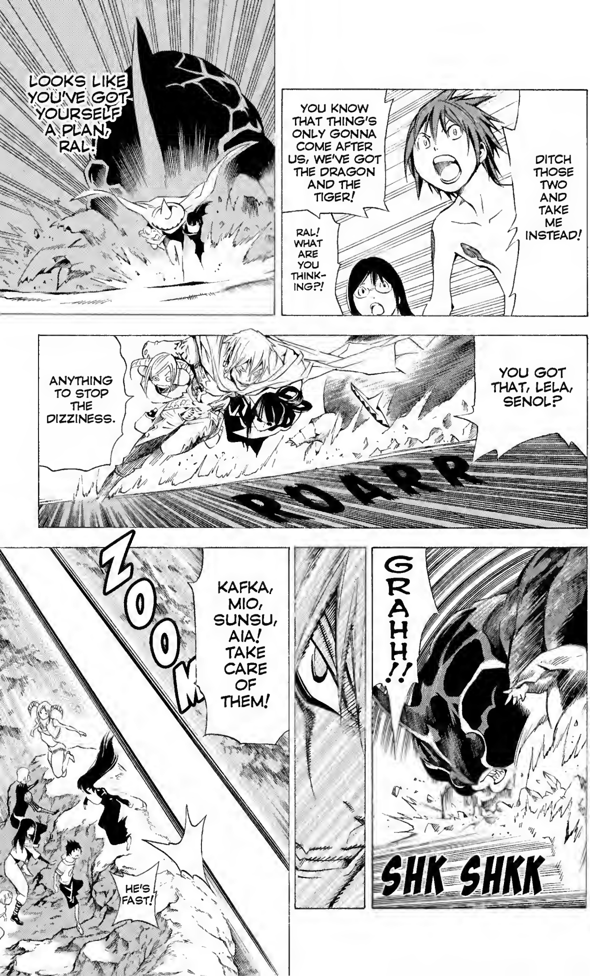

IING
DAMN, SHE DISAPPEARED.
!
ARISE, BLACK RHINOCEROS!
KR AK KRAK
LELA! GET US OUT OF HERE!
ALL RIGHT!
WHAT? ALREADY? YOU SUCK!
WOOSH

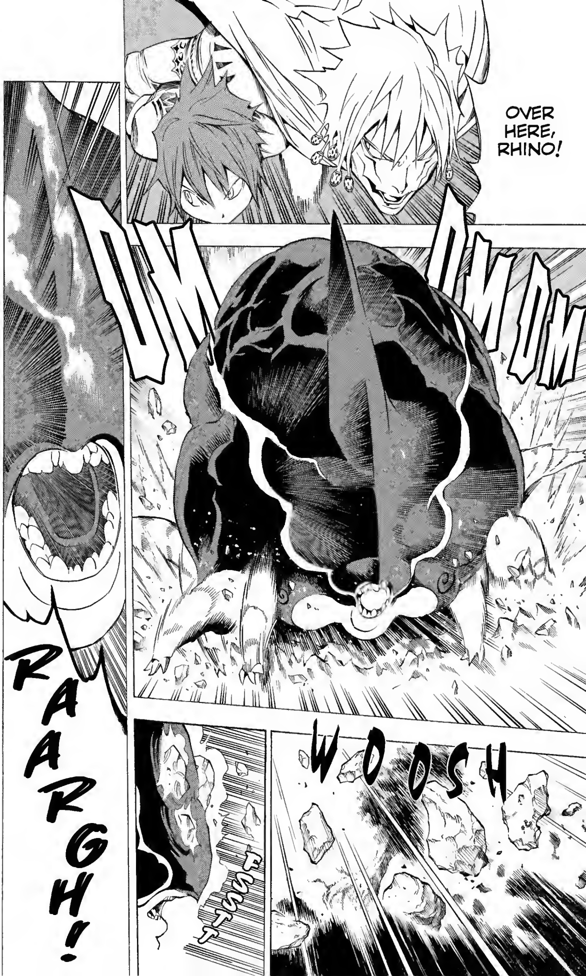

RMBLE
CRMBLE
SCREEECH
BOOM
BLACK RHINOCEROS!
IT'S HERE!
HE HUGE!
CREEPY!!

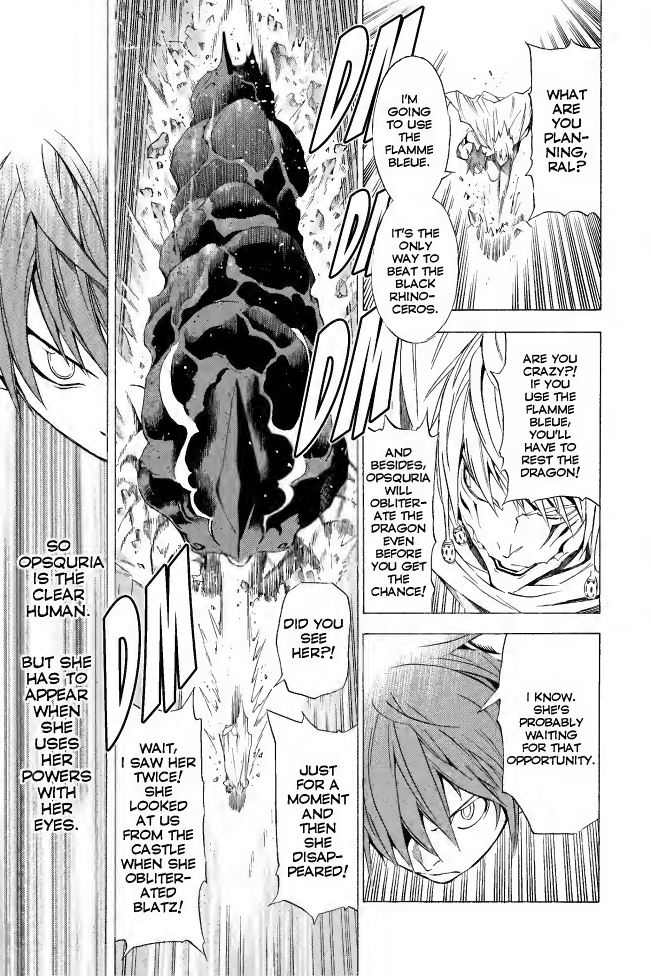

KABOOSH
GRAAAAGH!
DMMDM
DM
GANETTE!
IS THAT THE RHINO?!!
IT'S HUGE!
SLITHER
DMM DM DM
GLARE
BOOM
!!

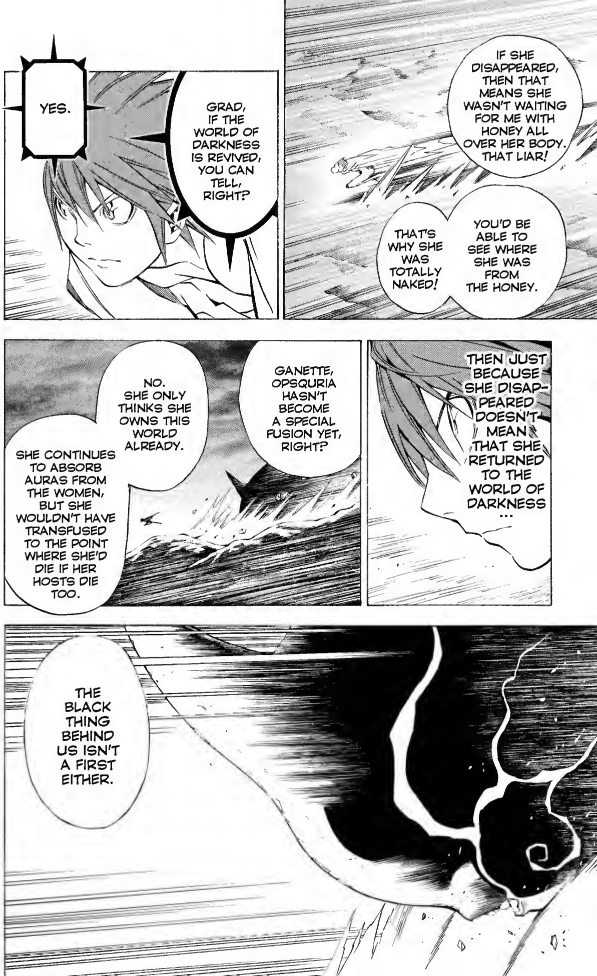

MASTER GANETTE, BLATZ--
AHHHHH!
OP-SQURIA'S EYES WORK AT THIS RANGE?
THE RHINO'S RIGHT BELOW US!
THIS IS BAD!
DM DM DM DM
MASTER GANETTE, USE THIS.
!
TOMP
FSHH!
DM DM DM
DM
WE'D BE DEAD IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE TIGER'S SPEED!
IT'S COMING AFTER US!!
ZSH

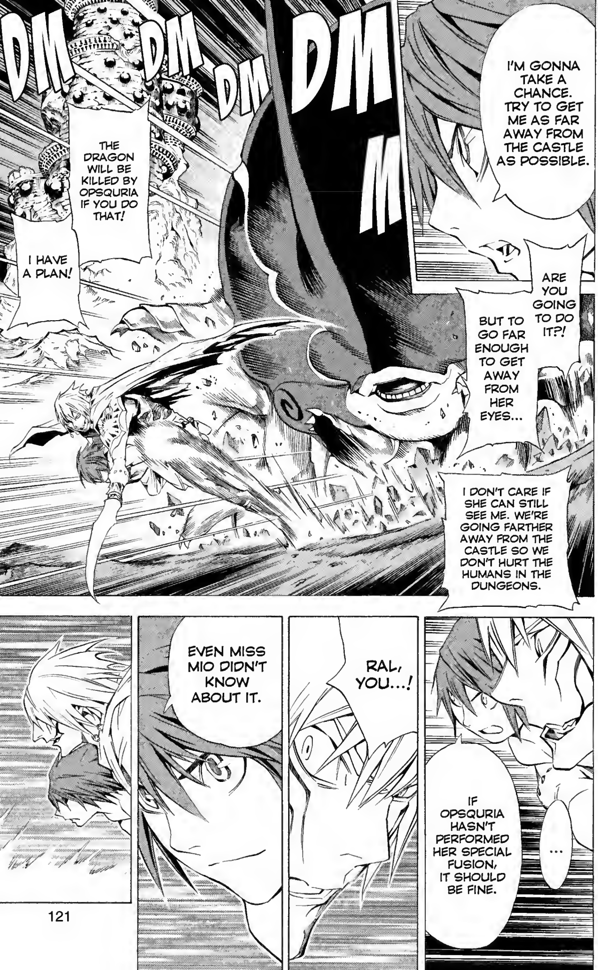

HA HA! GANETTE, ARE YOU RUNNING AWAY AGAIN?!
YOU'RE LATE, RAL! WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG?!
I'M LATE? DID YOU ALREADY KILL OPSQURIA?!
NOT YET!
THEN LET ME JOIN THAT GAME OF TAG YOU'RE PLAYING!
DM DM DM DM
WHAT?
I'M TELLING YOU TO CARRY ME WITH YOU WHILE YOU RUN!
ARE YOU BLIND? I GOT MY HANDS FULL WITH PRETTY GIRLS RIGHT NOW!
DON'T JOKE RIGHT NOW!

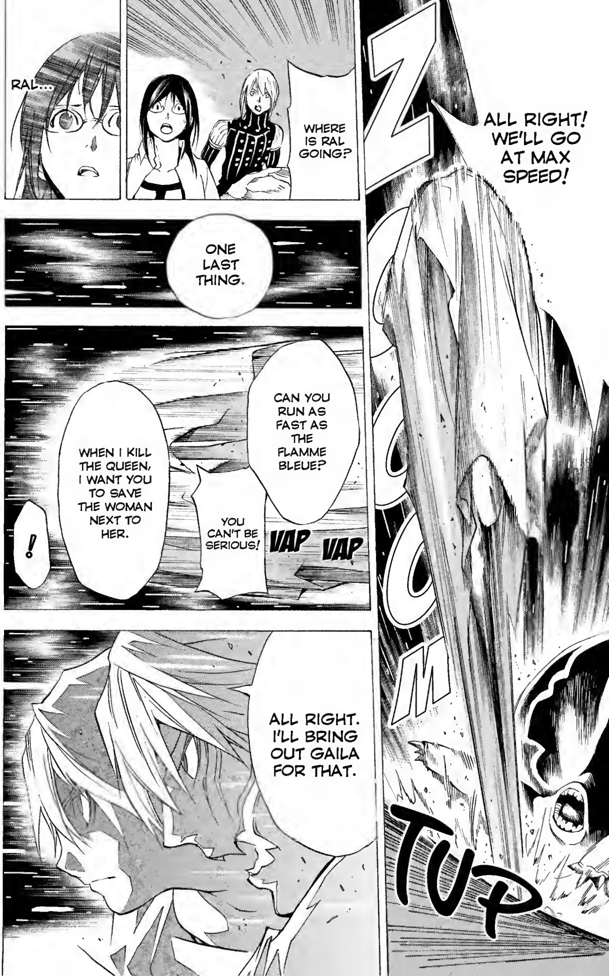

DITCH THOSE TWO AND TAKE ME INSTEAD!
YOU KNOW THAT THING'S ONLY GONNA COME AFTER US, WE'VE GOT THE DRAGON AND THE TIGER!
RAL! WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?!
LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE GOT YOURSELF A PLAN, RAL!
YOU GOT THAT, LELA, SENOL?
ANYTHING TO STOP THE DIZZINESS.
ROARR
GRAHH!!
SHK SHKK
ZOOM
KAFKA, MIO, SUNSU, AIA! TAKE CARE OF THEM!
HE'S FAST!

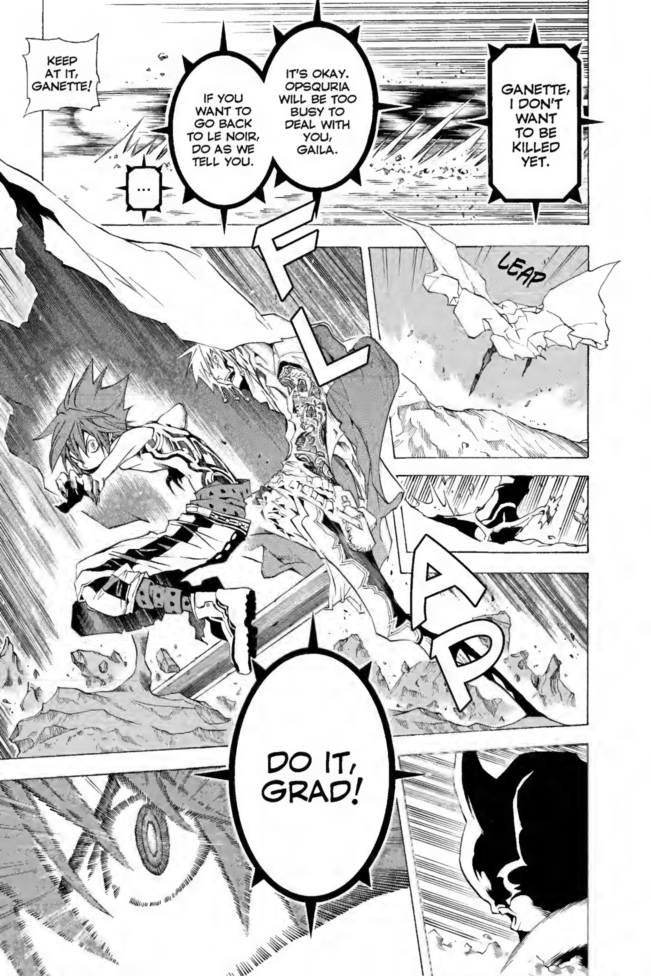

OVER HERE, RHINO!
DUM
DMDM
RARRGH!
WOOSH
FSSTT

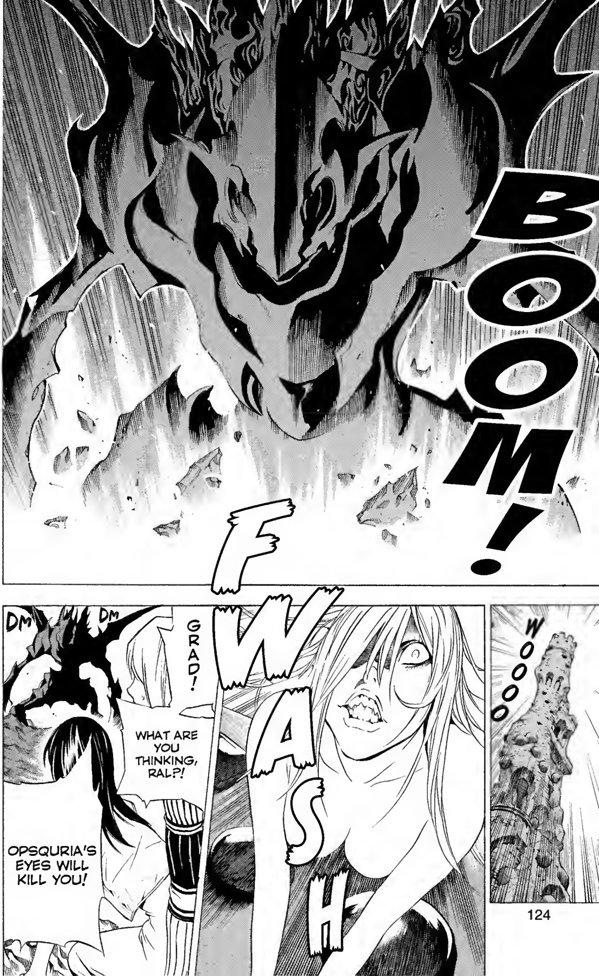

WHAT ARE YOU PLANNING, RAL?
I'M GOING TO USE THE FLAMME BLEUE.
IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO BEAT THE BLACK RHINOCEROS.
DIM
DIM
DIM
ARE YOU CRAZY?! IF YOU USE THE FLAMME BLEUE, YOU'LL HAVE TO REST THE DRAGON!
AND BESIDES, OPSQURIA WILL OBLITERATE THE DRAGON EVEN BEFORE YOU GET THE CHANCE!
I KNOW. SHE'S PROBABLY WAITING FOR THAT OPPORTUNITY.
DID YOU SEE HER?!
JUST FOR A MOMENT AND THEN SHE DISAPPEARED!
WAIT, I SAW HER TWICE! SHE LOOKED AT US FROM THE CASTLE WHEN SHE OBLITERATED BLATZ!
DIM
SO OPSQURIA IS THE CLEAR HUMAN.
BUT SHE HAS TO APPEAR WHEN SHE USES HER POWERS WITH HER EYES.

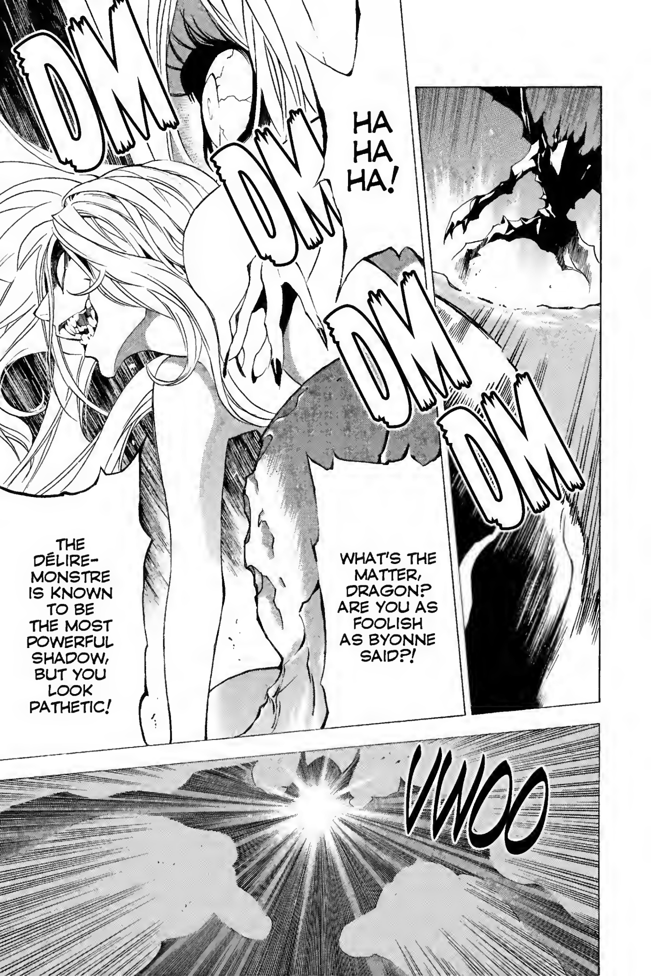

IF SHE DISAPPEARED, THEN THAT MEANS SHE WASN'T WAITING FOR ME WITH HONEY ALL OVER HER BODY. THAT LIAR!
YOU'D BE ABLE TO SEE WHERE SHE WAS FROM THE HONEY.
THAT'S WHY SHE WAS TOTALLY NAKED!
GRAD, IF THE WORLD OF DARKNESS IS REVIVED, YOU CAN TELL, RIGHT?
YES.
THEN JUST BECAUSE SHE DISAPPEARED DOESN'T MEAN THAT SHE RETURNED TO THE WORLD OF DARKNESS ...
GANETTE, OPSQURIA HASN'T BECOME A SPECIAL FUSION YET, RIGHT?
NO. SHE ONLY THINKS SHE OWNS THIS WORLD ALREADY.
SHE CONTINUES TO ABSORB AURAS FROM THE WOMEN, BUT SHE WOULDN'T HAVE TRANSFUSED TO THE POINT WHERE SHE'D DIE IF HER HOSTS DIE TOO.
THE BLACK THING BEHIND US ISN'T A FIRST EITHER.


DM DM DM DM M
I'M GONNA TAKE A CHANCE. TRY TO GET ME AS FAR AWAY FROM THE CASTLE AS POSSIBLE.
ARE YOU GOING TO DO IT?!
BUT TO GO FAR ENOUGH TO GET AWAY FROM HER EYES...
THE DRAGON WILL BE KILLED BY OPSQURIA IF YOU DO THAT!
I HAVE A PLAN!
I DON'T CARE IF SHE CAN STILL SEE ME. WE'RE GOING FARTHER AWAY FROM THE CASTLE SO WE DON'T HURT THE HUMANS IN THE DUNGEONS.
...
IF OPSQURIA HASN'T PERFORMED HER SPECIAL FUSION, IT SHOULD BE FINE.
RAL, YOU...!
EVEN MISS MIO DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT IT.

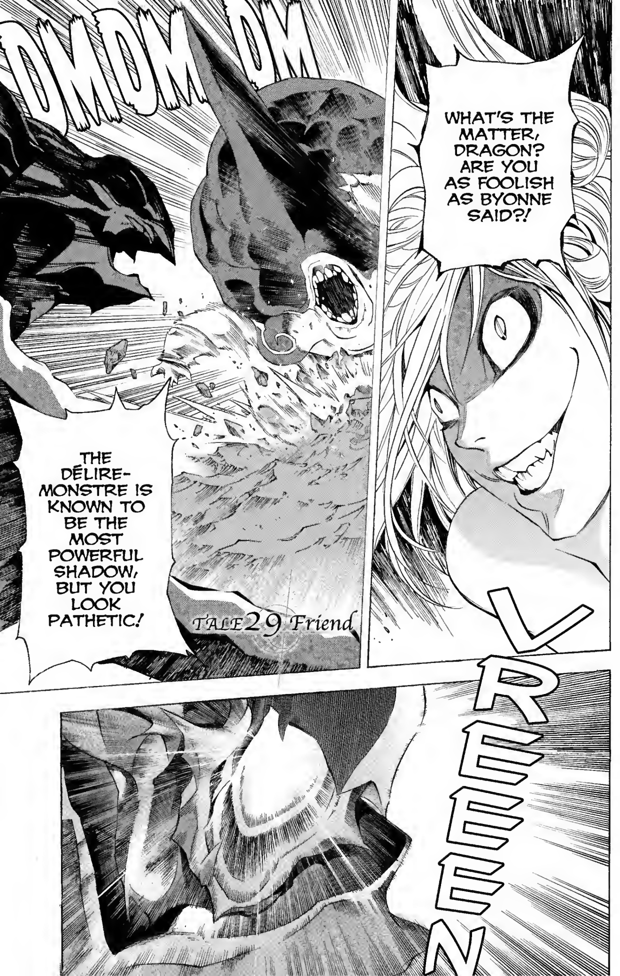

WHERE IS RAL GOING?
RAL...
ONE LAST THING.
CAN YOU RUN AS FAST AS THE FLAMME BLEUE?
YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS!
VAP VAP
WHEN I KILL THE QUEEN, I WANT YOU TO SAVE THE WOMAN NEXT TO HER.
!
ALL RIGHT. I'LL BRING OUT GAILA FOR THAT.
ALL RIGHT! WE'LL GO AT MAX SPEED!
ZOOOM
TUP


GANETTE, I DON'T WANT TO BE KILLED YET.
IT'S OKAY. OPSQURIA WILL BE TOO BUSY TO DEAL WITH YOU, GAILA.
IF YOU WANT TO GO BACK TO LE NOIR, DO AS WE TELL YOU.
KEEP AT IT, GANETTE!
...
LEAP
FLLAP
DO IT, GRAD!


BOOM!
FWASH
WOOOO
GRAD!
WHAT ARE YOU THINKING, RAL?!
DM DM
OPSQURIA'S EYES WILL KILL YOU!

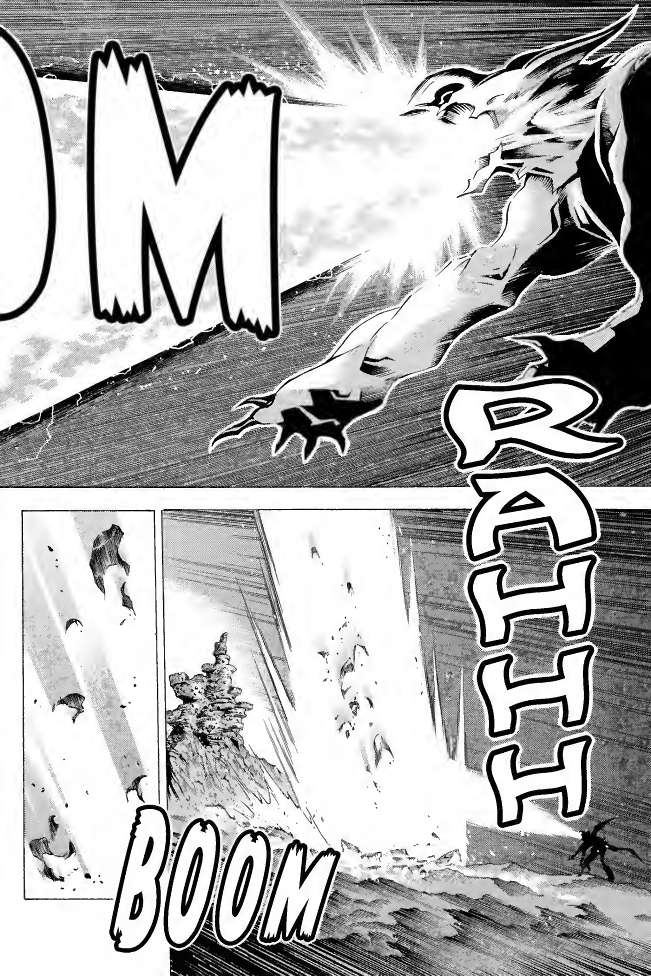

DOM
DOM
HA HA HA!
DOM
DOM
WHAT'S THE MATTER, DRAGON? ARE YOU AS FOOLISH AS BYONNE SAID?!
THE DÉLIRE-MONSTRE IS KNOWN TO BE THE MOST POWERFUL SHADOW, BUT YOU LOOK PATHETIC!
VWOO

RainGrad

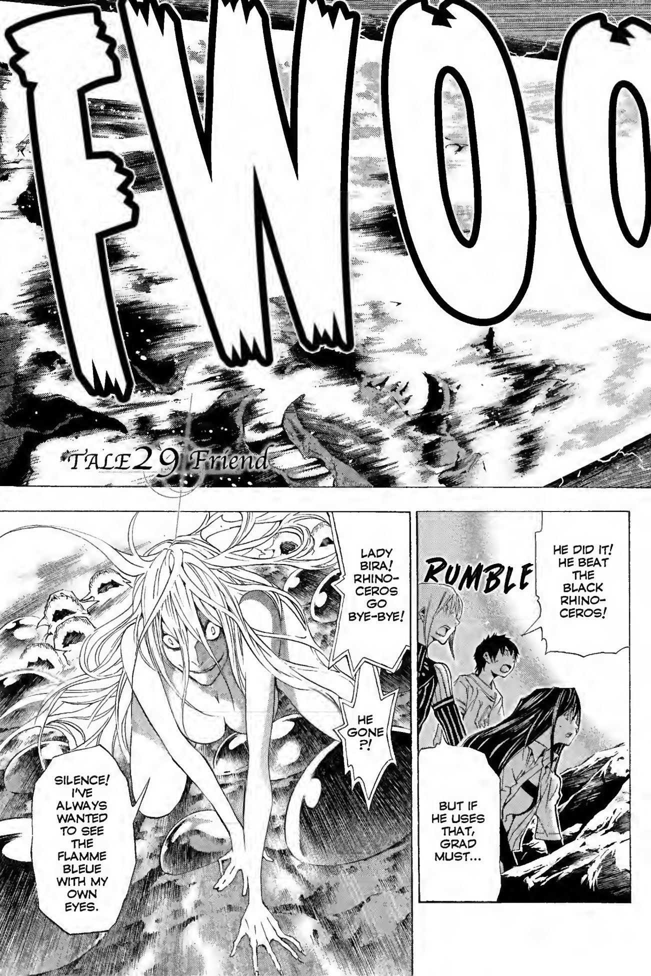


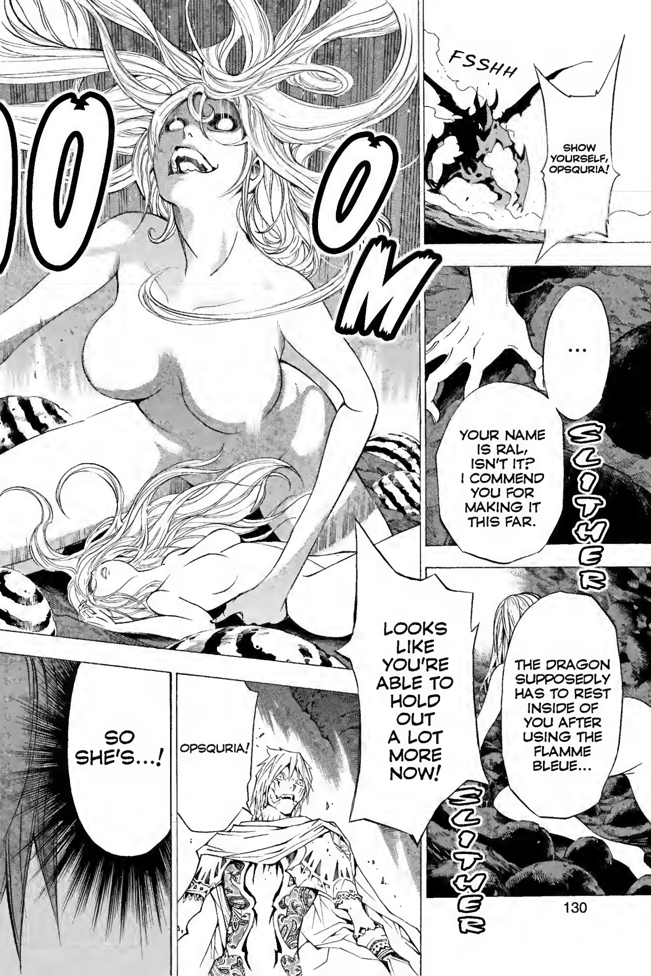
TALE 29 Friend

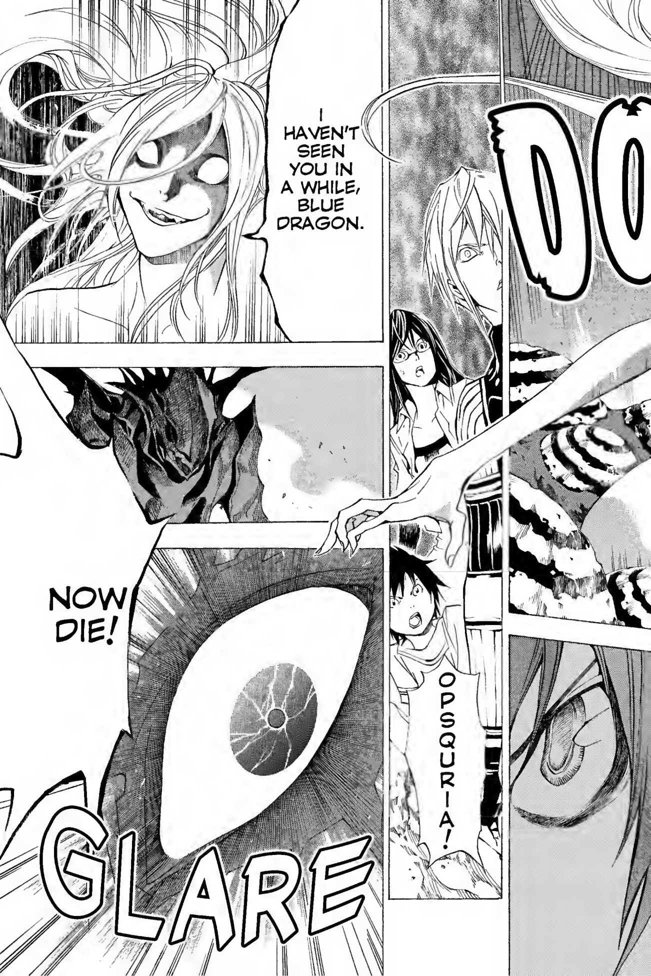
WHAT'S THE MATTER, DRAGON? ARE YOU AS FOOLISH AS BYONNE SAID?!
DOMDOMDOM
THE DÉLIRE-MONSTRE IS KNOWN TO BE THE MOST POWERFUL SHADOW, BUT YOU LOOK PATHETIC!
VREEEEN

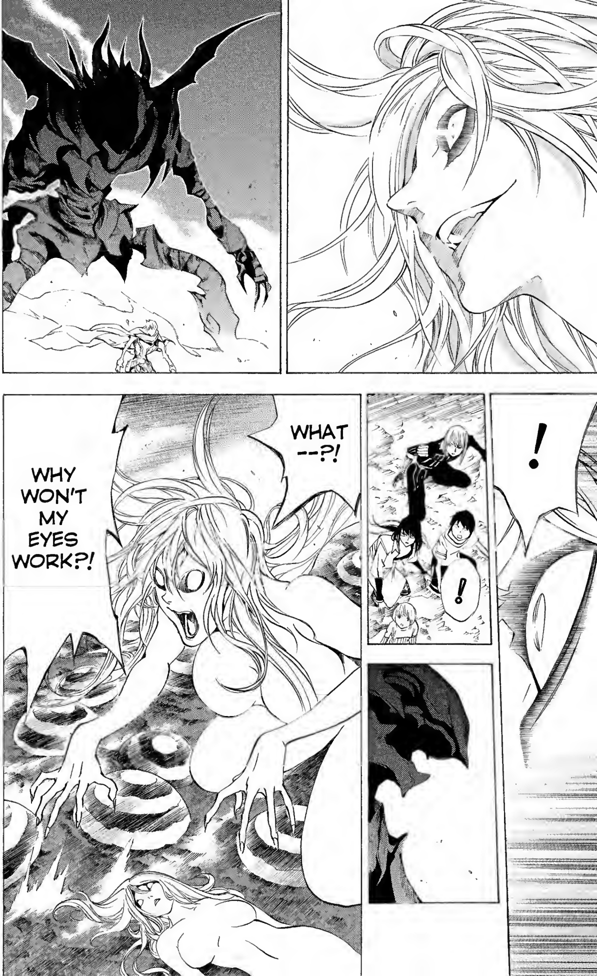

OM
RAHHH
BOOM

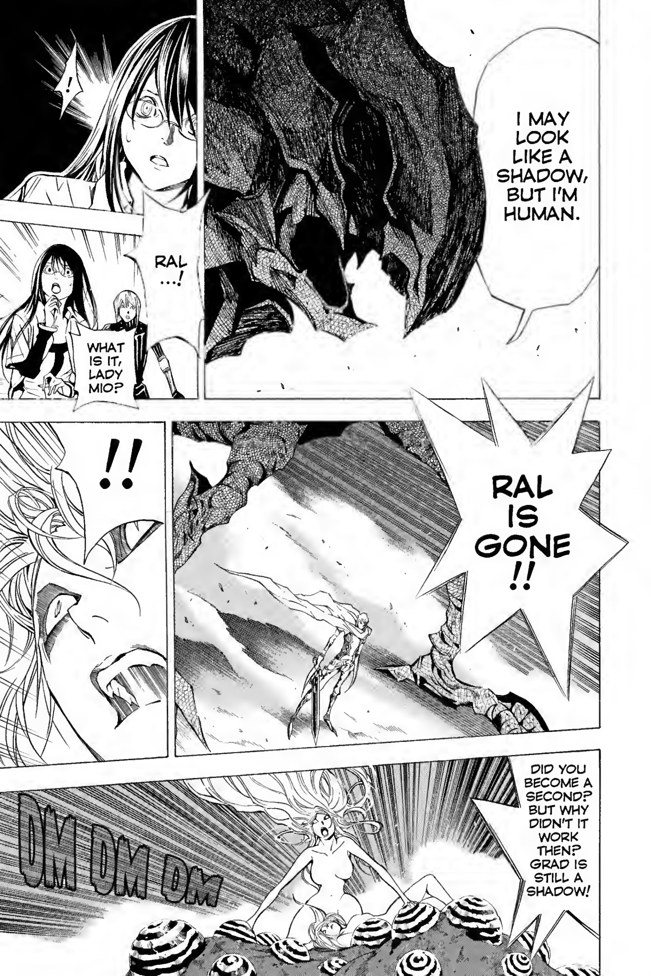
TALE 29 Friend

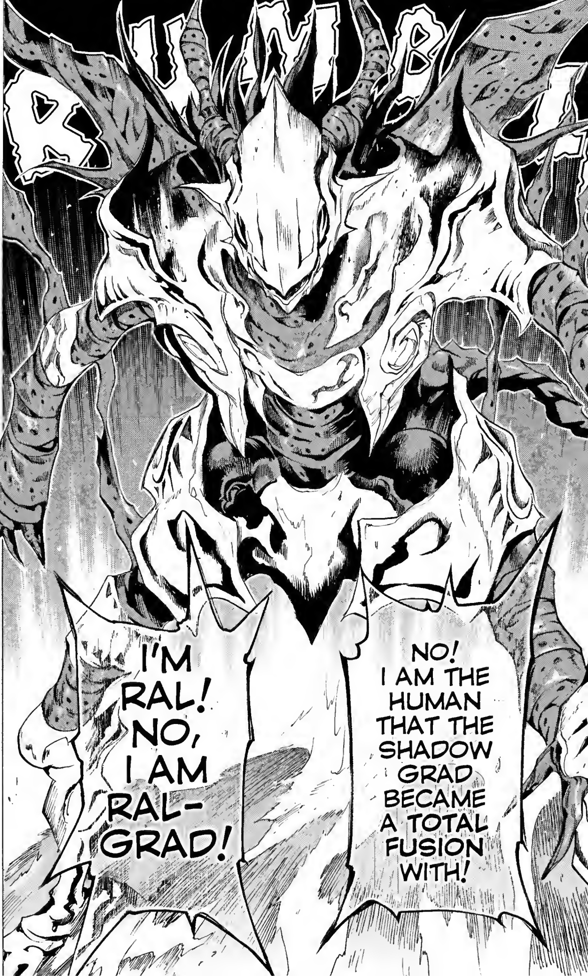

FWOO
RUMBLE
HE DID IT! HE BEAT THE BLACK RHINOCEROS!
BUT IF HE USES THAT, GRAD MUST...
LADY BIRA! RHINOCEROS GO BYE-BYE!
HE GONE?!
SILENCE! I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO SEE THE FLAMME BLEUE WITH MY OWN EYES.

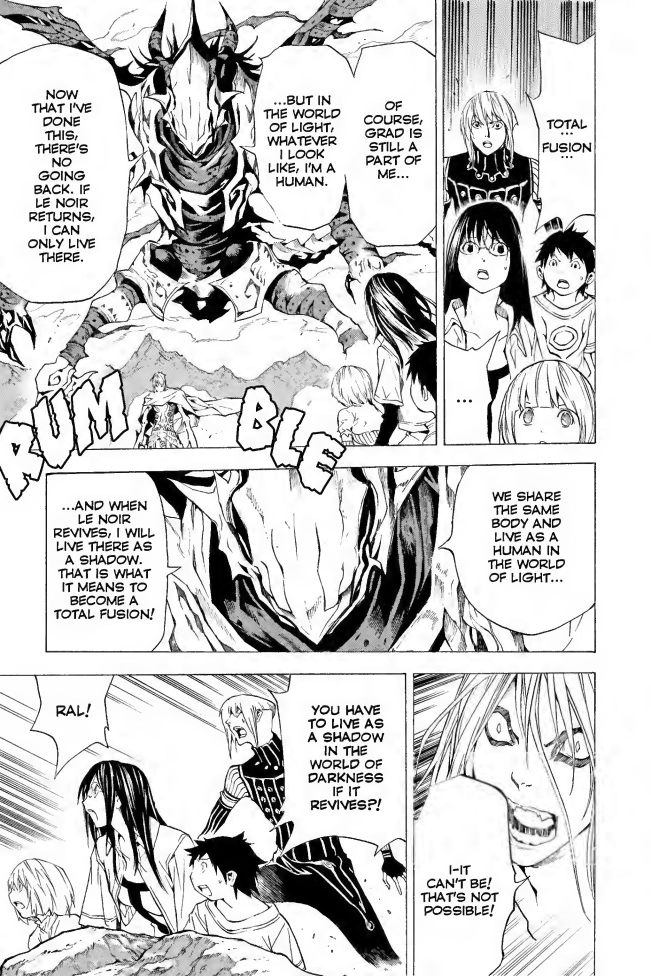

FSSHH
SHOW YOURSELF, OPSQURIA!
OOOM
...
YOUR NAME IS RAL, ISN'T IT? I COMMEND YOU FOR MAKING IT THIS FAR.
SLITHER
LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE ABLE TO HOLD OUT A LOT MORE NOW!
THE DRAGON SUPPOSEDLY HAS TO REST INSIDE OF YOU AFTER USING THE FLAMME BLEUE...
SLITHER
OPSQURIA!
SO SHE'S...!

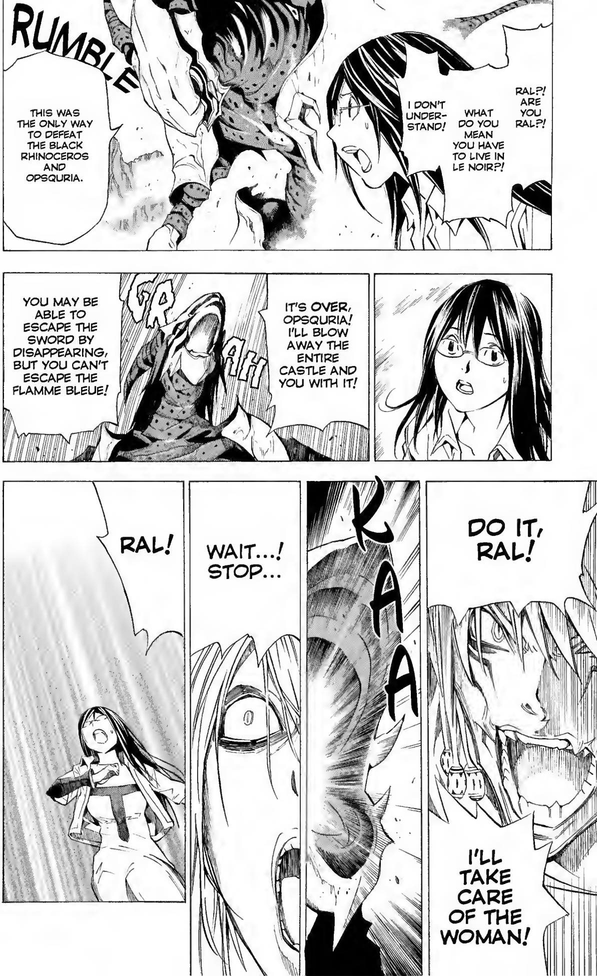

DO
I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN A WHILE, BLUE DRAGON.
OPSQURIA!
NOW DIE!
GLARE

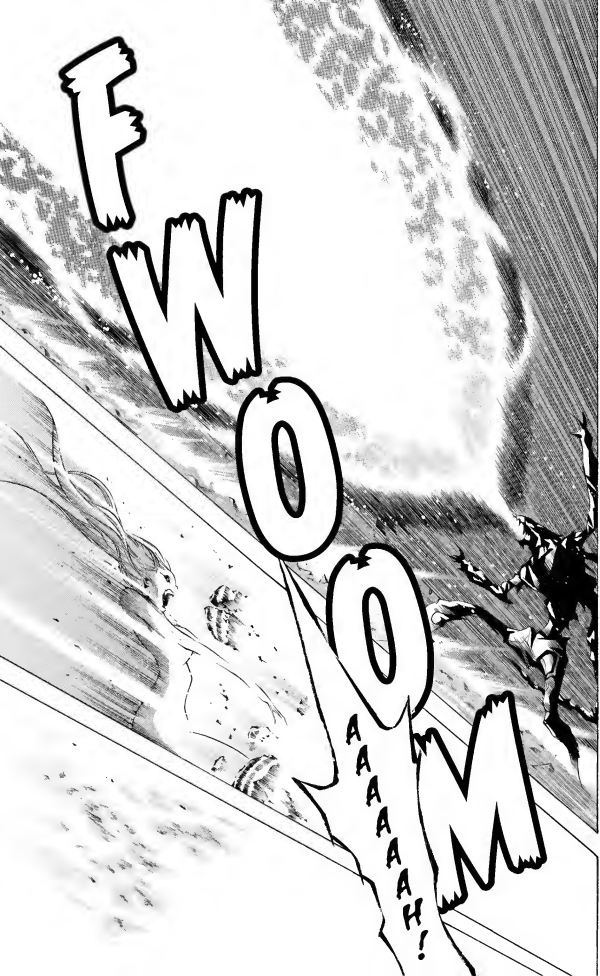

!
!
WHAT --?!
WHY WON'T MY EYES WORK?!

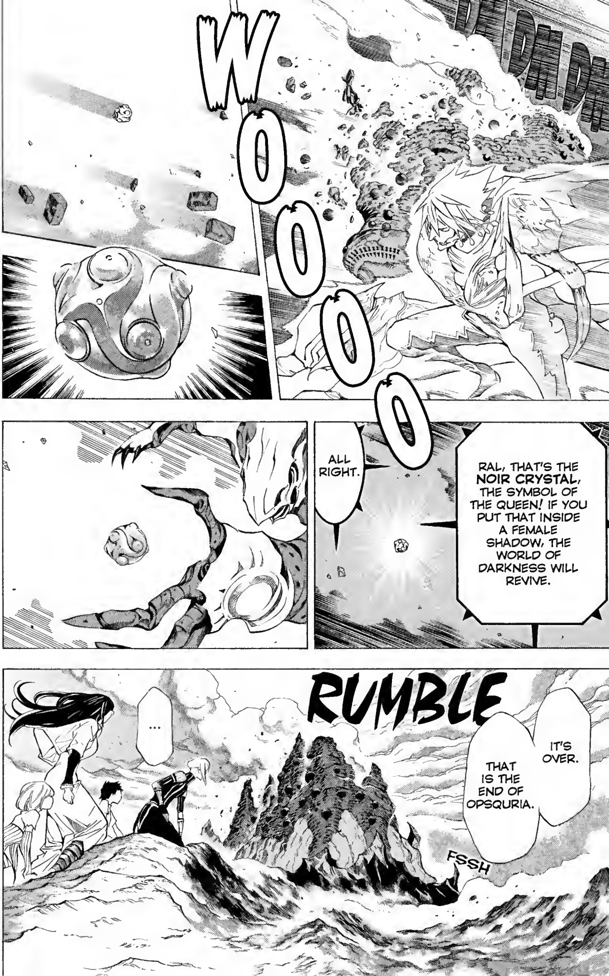

I MAY LOOK LIKE A SHADOW, BUT I'M HUMAN.
!
RAL ...!
WHAT IS IT, LADY MIO?
RAL IS GONE!!
!!
DID YOU BECOME A SECOND? BUT WHY DIDN'T IT WORK THEN? GRAD IS STILL A SHADOW!
DM DM DM

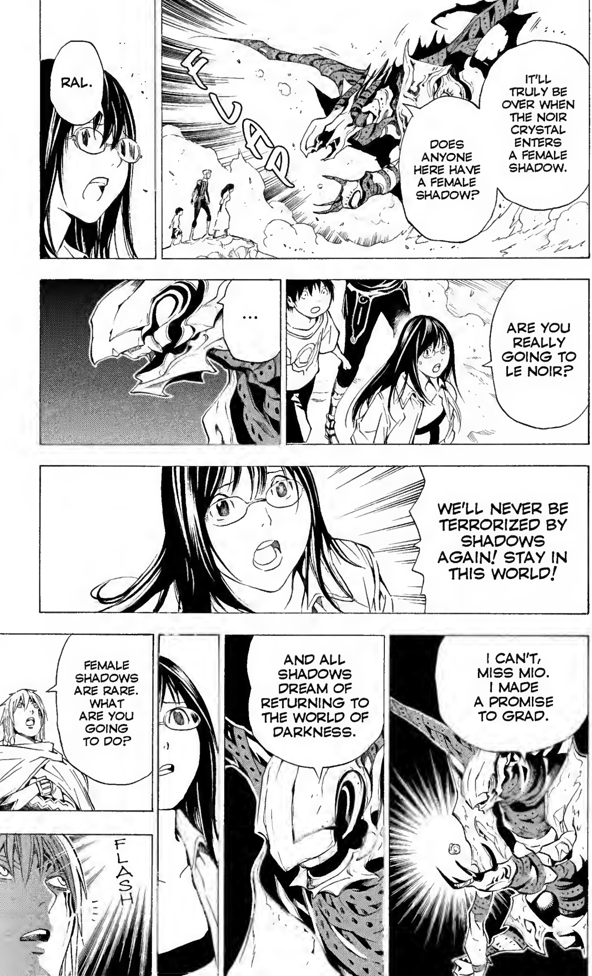

RUMBL
NO! I AM THE HUMAN THAT THE SHADOW GRAD BECAME A TOTAL FUSION WITH!
I'M RAL! NO, I AM RAL-GRAD!

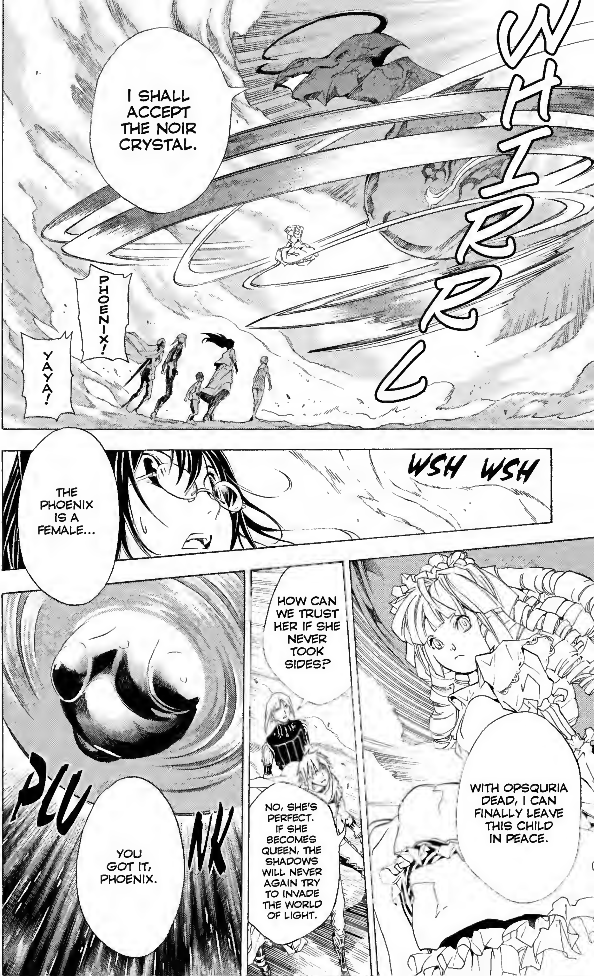

TOTAL... FUSION...
...
OF COURSE, GRAD IS STILL A PART OF ME...
...BUT IN THE WORLD OF LIGHT, WHATEVER I LOOK LIKE, I'M A HUMAN.
NOW THAT I'VE DONE THIS, THERE'S NO GOING BACK. IF LE NOIR RETURNS, I CAN ONLY LIVE THERE.
RUMBLE
WE SHARE THE SAME BODY AND LIVE AS A HUMAN IN THE WORLD OF LIGHT...
...AND WHEN LE NOIR REVIVES, I WILL LIVE THERE AS A SHADOW. THAT IS WHAT IT MEANS TO BECOME A TOTAL FUSION!
I-IT CAN'T BE! THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE!
YOU HAVE TO LIVE AS A SHADOW IN THE WORLD OF DARKNESS IF IT REVIVES?!
RAL!

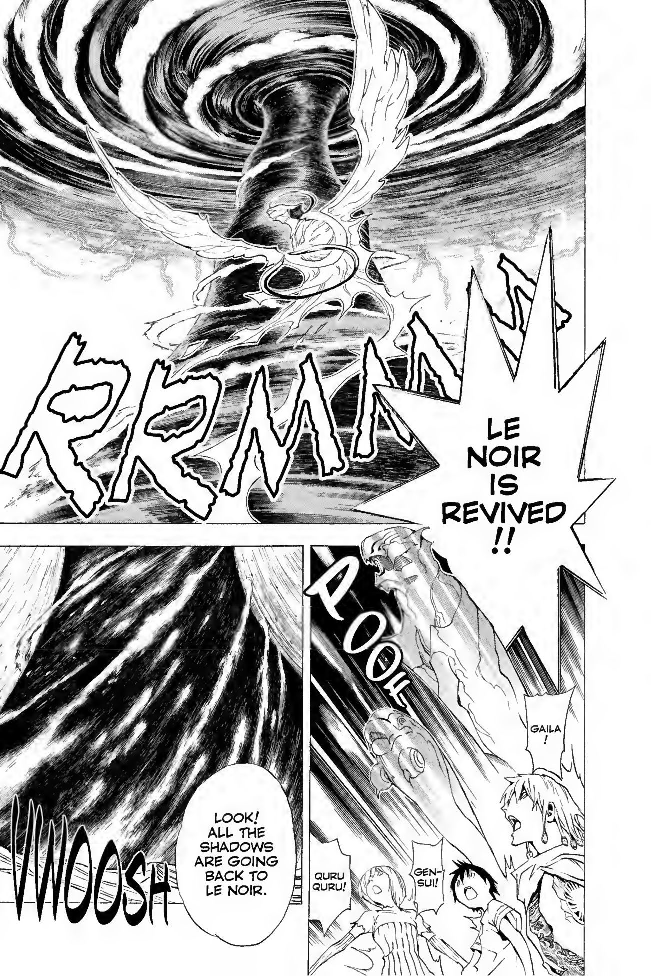

RAL?! ARE YOU RAL?!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU HAVE TO LIVE IN LE NOIR?!
I DON'T UNDERSTAND!
RUMBLE
THIS WAS THE ONLY WAY TO DEFEAT THE BLACK RHINOCEROS AND OPSQURIA.
IT'S OVER, OPSQURIA! I'LL BLOW AWAY THE ENTIRE CASTLE AND YOU WITH IT!
GAAH
YOU MAY BE ABLE TO ESCAPE THE SWORD BY DISAPPEARING, BUT YOU CAN'T ESCAPE THE FLAMME BLEUE!
DO IT, RAL!
I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE WOMAN!
KAAA
WAIT...! STOP...
RAL!

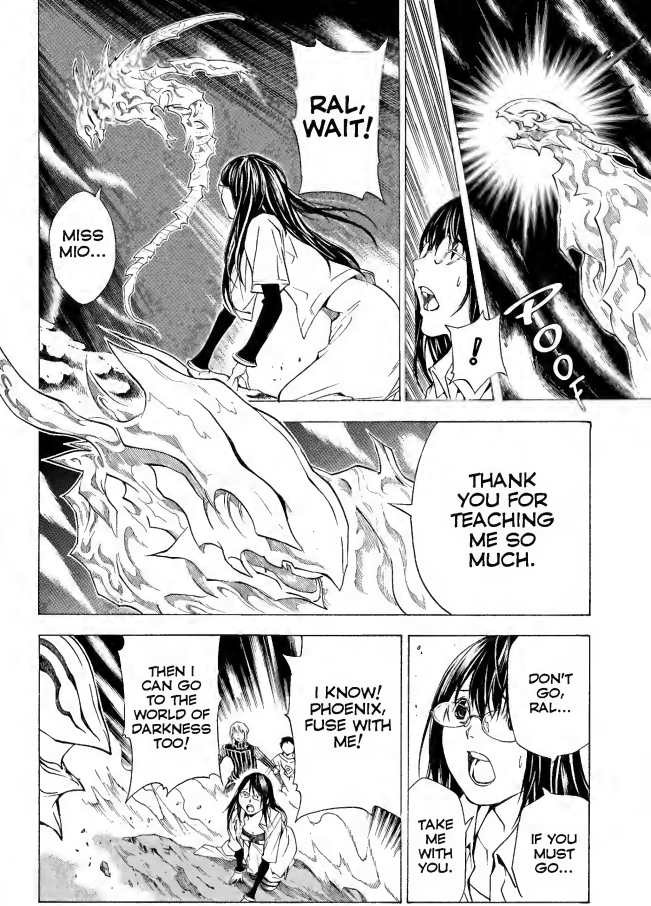

FWOOM
AAAAAAH!

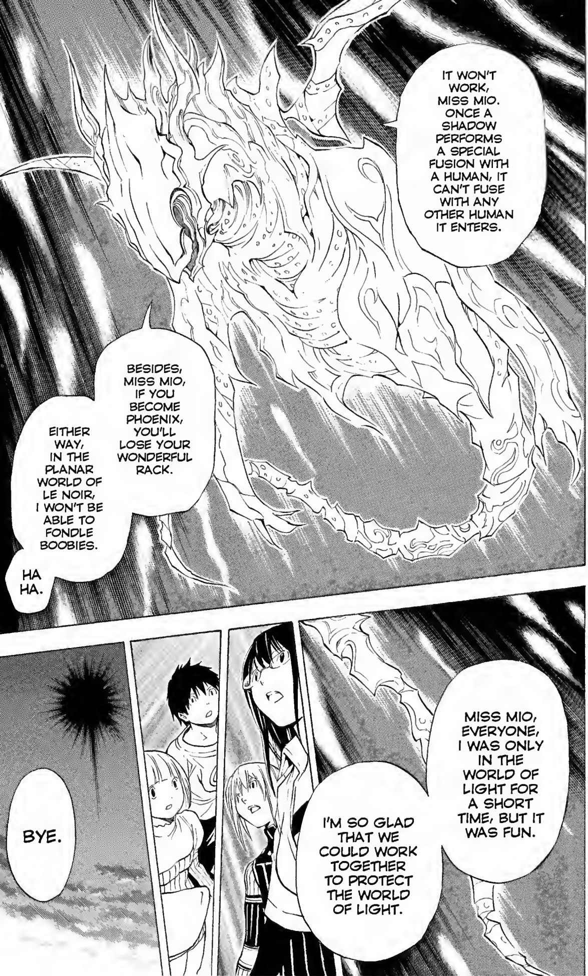

DA DA DA
WOOOOO
RAL, THAT'S THE **NOIR CRYSTAL**, THE SYMBOL OF THE QUEEN! IF YOU PUT THAT INSIDE A FEMALE SHADOW, THE WORLD OF DARKNESS WILL REVIVE.
ALL RIGHT.
RUMBLE
IT'S OVER.
THAT IS THE END OF OPSQURIA.
...
FSSH

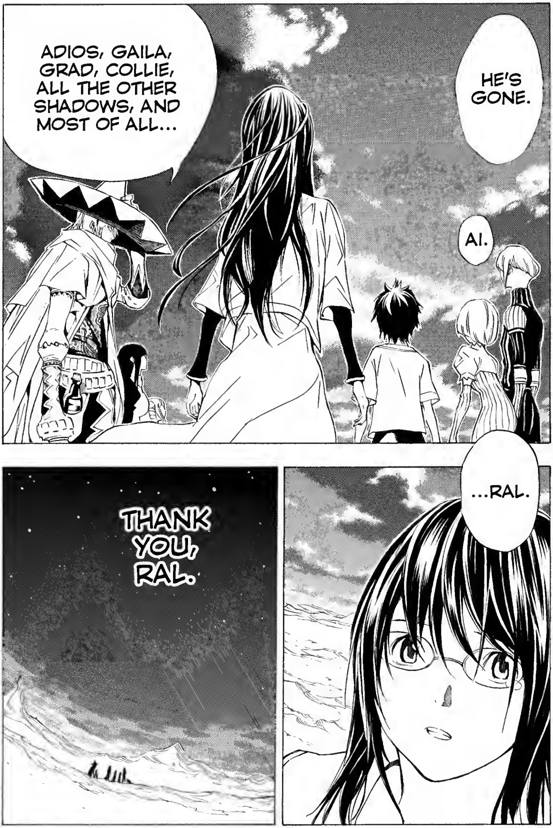

IT'LL TRULY BE OVER WHEN THE NOIR CRYSTAL ENTERS A FEMALE SHADOW.
DOES ANYONE HERE HAVE A FEMALE SHADOW?
FLAP
RAL.
ARE YOU REALLY GOING TO LE NOIR?
...
WE'LL NEVER BE TERRORIZED BY SHADOWS AGAIN! STAY IN THIS WORLD!
I CAN'T, MISS MIO. I MADE A PROMISE TO GRAD.
AND ALL SHADOWS DREAM OF RETURNING TO THE WORLD OF DARKNESS.
FEMALE SHADOWS ARE RARE. WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
FLASH
...

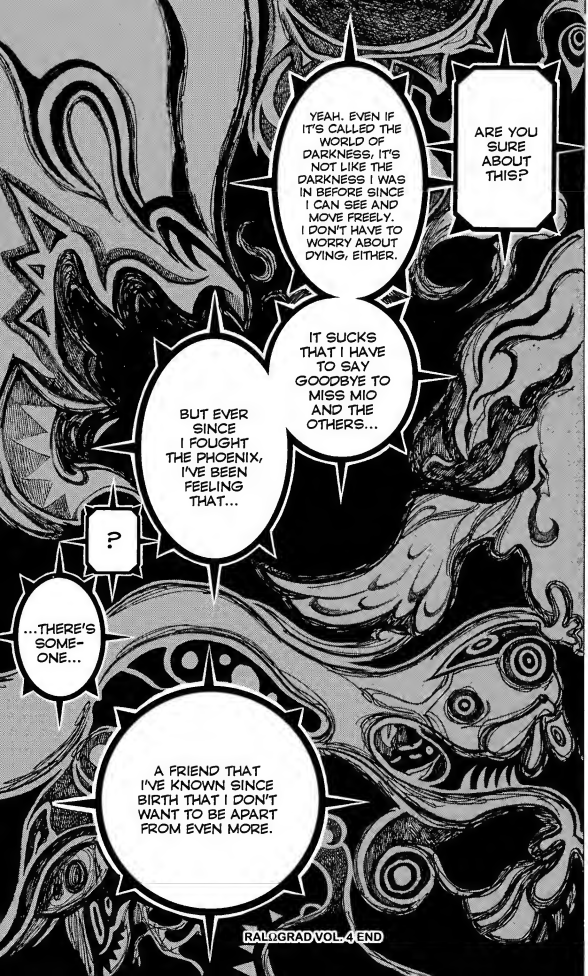

WHIRRL
I SHALL ACCEPT THE NOIR CRYSTAL.
PHOENIX!
YAYA!
WSH WSH
THE PHOENIX IS A FEMALE...
WITH OPSQURIA DEAD, I CAN FINALLY LEAVE THIS CHILD IN PEACE.
HOW CAN WE TRUST HER IF SHE NEVER TOOK SIDES?
NO, SHE'S PERFECT. IF SHE BECOMES QUEEN, THE SHADOWS WILL NEVER AGAIN TRY TO INVADE THE WORLD OF LIGHT.
PLUNK
YOU GOT IT, PHOENIX.


RRMMM
LE NOIR IS REVIVED!!
POOF
GAILA!
GEN-SUI!
QURU QURU!
LOOK! ALL THE SHADOWS ARE GOING BACK TO LE NOIR.
VWOOSH


POOF
!
RAL, WAIT!
MISS MIO...
THANK YOU FOR TEACHING ME SO MUCH.
DON'T GO, RAL...
IF YOU MUST GO...
TAKE ME WITH YOU.
I KNOW! PHOENIX, FUSE WITH ME!
THEN I CAN GO TO THE WORLD OF DARKNESS TOO!


IT WON'T WORK, MISS MIO. ONCE A SHADOW PERFORMS A SPECIAL FUSION WITH A HUMAN, IT CAN'T FUSE WITH ANY OTHER HUMAN IT ENTERS.
BESIDES, MISS MIO, IF YOU BECOME PHOENIX, YOU'LL LOSE YOUR WONDERFUL RACK.
EITHER WAY, IN THE PLANAR WORLD OF LE NOIR, I WON'T BE ABLE TO FONDLE BOOBIES.
HA HA.
MISS MIO, EVERYONE, I WAS ONLY IN THE WORLD OF LIGHT FOR A SHORT TIME, BUT IT WAS FUN.
I'M SO GLAD THAT WE COULD WORK TOGETHER TO PROTECT THE WORLD OF LIGHT.
BYE.

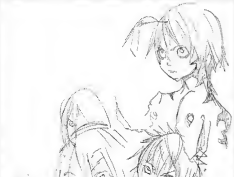

ADIOS, GAILA, GRAD, COLLIE, ALL THE OTHER SHADOWS, AND MOST OF ALL...
HE'S GONE.
AI.
THANK YOU, RAL.
...RAL.


ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS?
YEAH. EVEN IF IT'S CALLED THE WORLD OF DARKNESS, IT'S NOT LIKE THE DARKNESS I WAS IN BEFORE SINCE I CAN SEE AND MOVE FREELY. I DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT DYING, EITHER.
IT SUCKS THAT I HAVE TO SAY GOODBYE TO MISS MIO AND THE OTHERS...
BUT EVER SINCE I FOUGHT THE PHOENIX, I'VE BEEN FEELING THAT...
?
...THERE'S SOMEONE...
A FRIEND THAT I'VE KNOWN SINCE BIRTH THAT I DON'T WANT TO BE APART FROM EVEN MORE.

RALΩGRAD VOL. 4 END

RALΩGRAD DESIGN SKETCHES

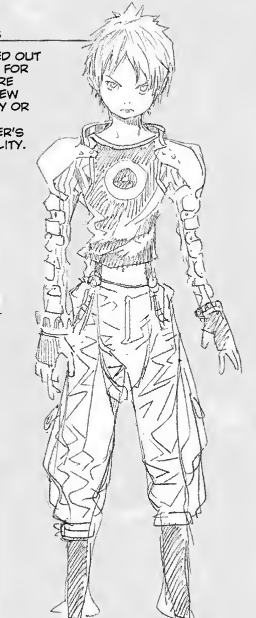
TAKE A BEHIND-THE-SCENES LOOK AT TAKESHI OBATA'S SKETCHES FROM THE MAKING OF RALΩGRAD! IN THIS SPECIAL COLLECTION, YOU'LL SEE SKETCHES OF RAL, GRAD AND EVEN SHADOWS NOT SEEN IN THE MANGA!



Ral

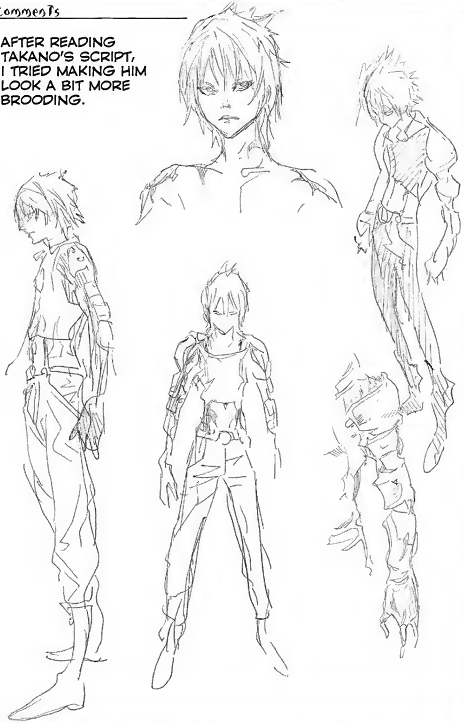
Comments

I SKETCHED OUT A DESIGN FOR RAL BEFORE I EVEN KNEW THE STORY OR THE MAIN CHARACTER'S PERSONALITY.

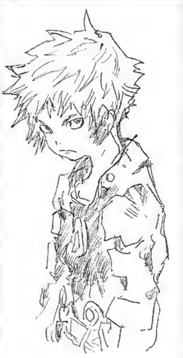


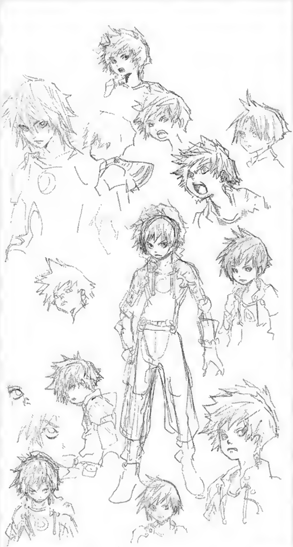
Comments

AFTER READING TAKANO'S SCRIPT, I TRIED MAKING HIM LOOK A BIT MORE BROODING.



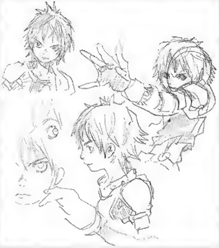
Ral

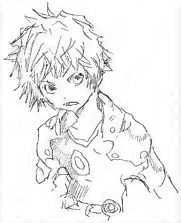


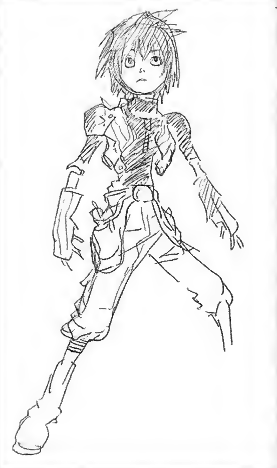


Comments

I GAVE HIM A MISCHIEVOUS LOOK SINCE HE HAS JUST COME OUT OF HIS CAGE AND HAS NEVER SEEN THE OUTSIDE WORLD.

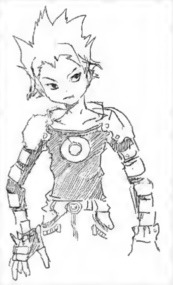


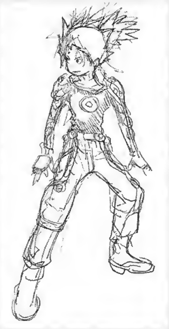


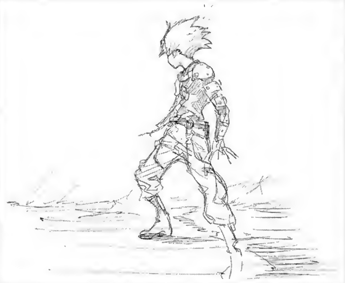


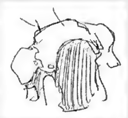
Comments

➡ I HAD PLANNED ON GOING WITH THIS CHARACTER DESIGN.

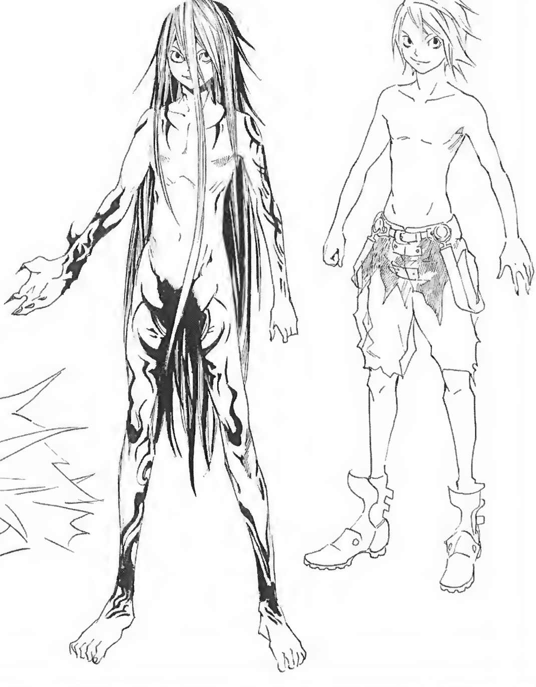


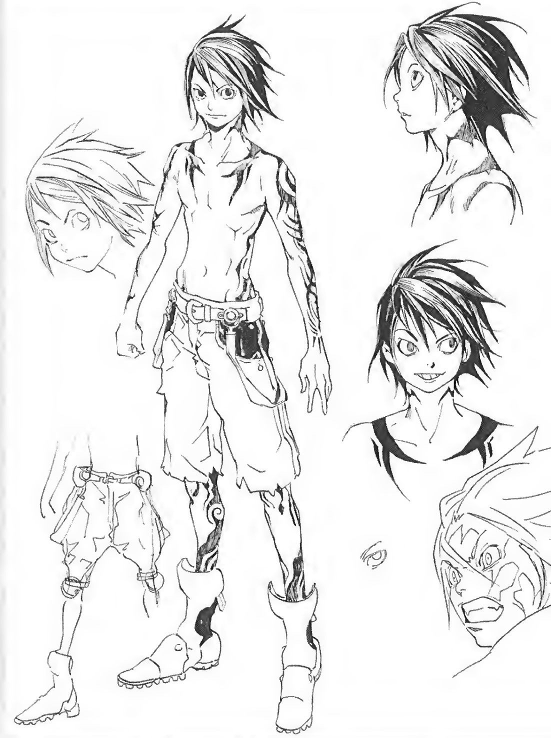


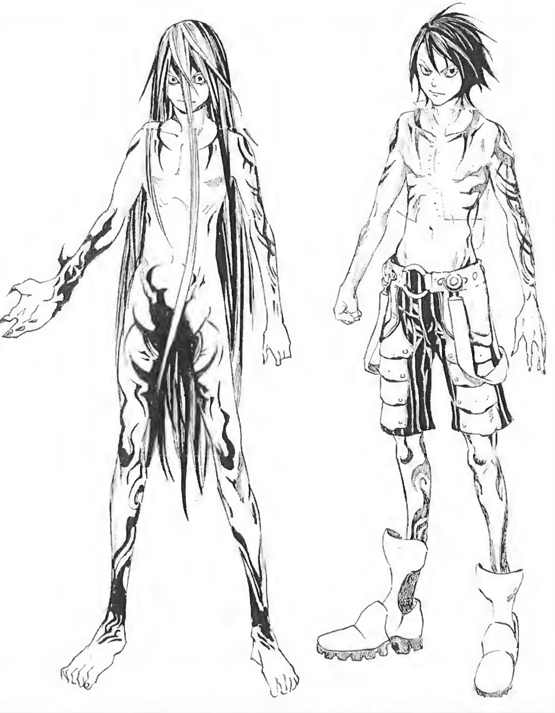


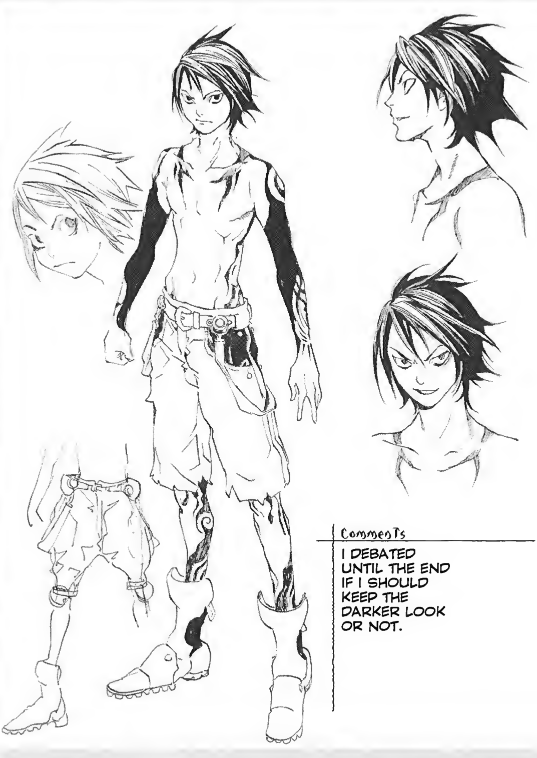


Ral





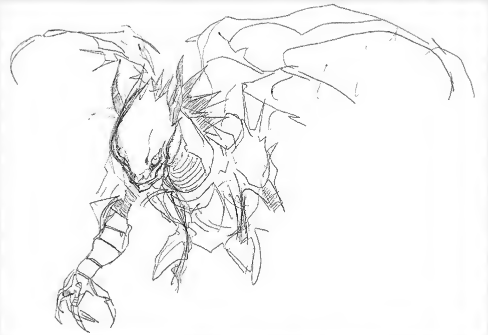

Ral



Comments

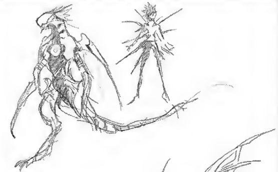
I DEBATED UNTIL THE END IF I SHOULD KEEP THE DARKER LOOK OR NOT.

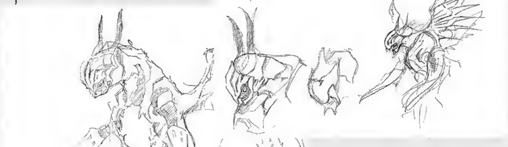
Grad

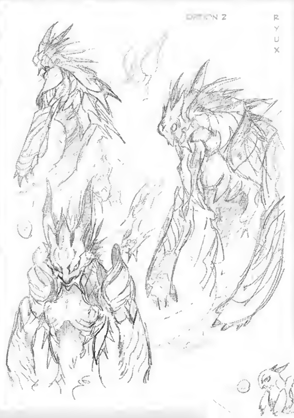


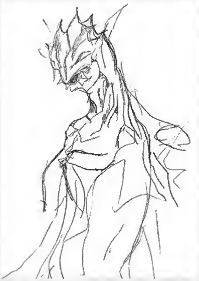
Comments

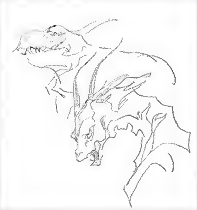
I HAD DECIDED FROM THE BEGINNING THAT GRAD WOULD LOOK SOMETHING LIKE A WESTERN-STYLE SUIT OF ARMOR. I DREW QUITE A FEW OPTIONS.

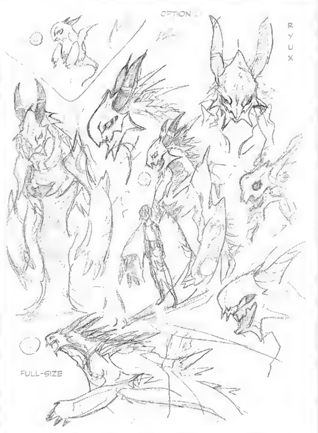


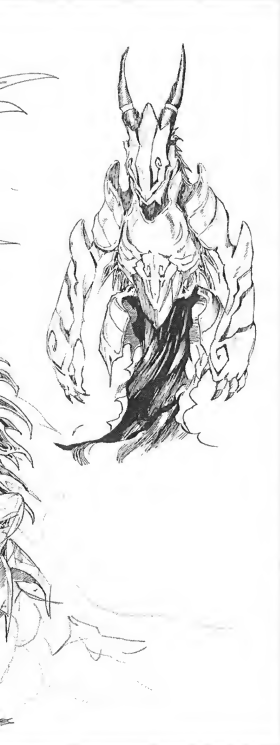



OPTION 2
RYUX

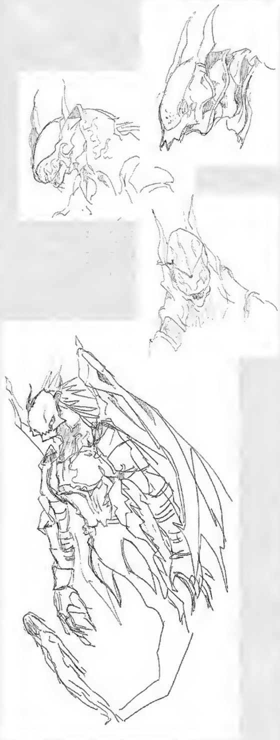


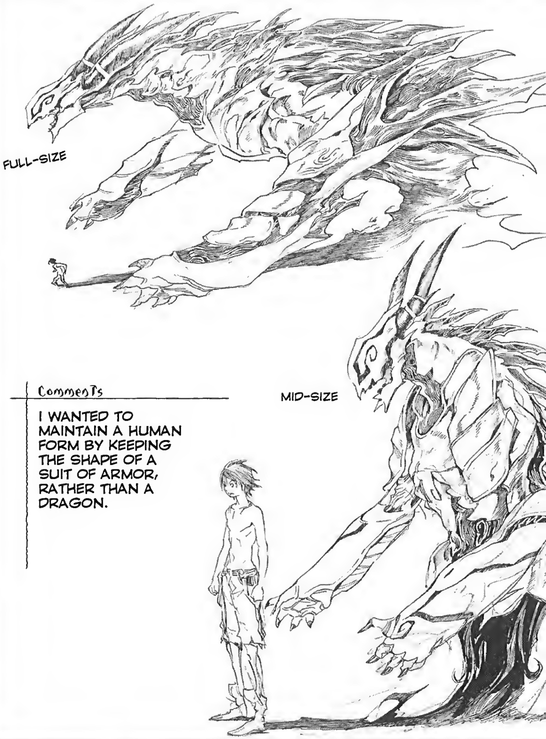



OPTION 1
RYUX
FULL-SIZE



Grad

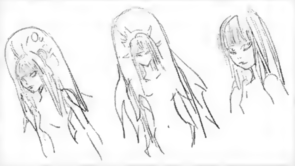


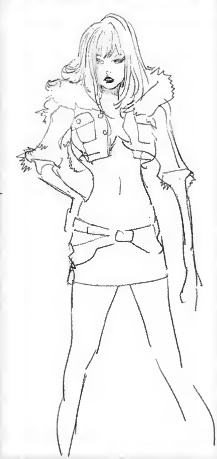

FULL-SIZE
MID-SIZE

Comments

I WANTED TO MAINTAIN A HUMAN FORM BY KEEPING THE SHAPE OF A SUIT OF ARMOR, RATHER THAN A DRAGON.

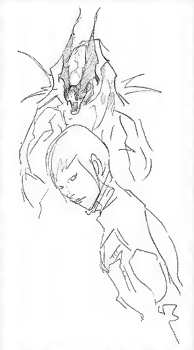
Others

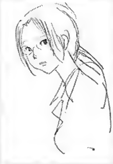


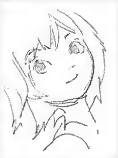


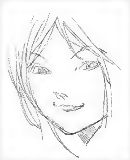
Comments

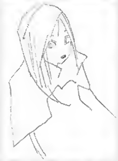
THIS IS BIRA. BUT HERE SHE LOOKS LIKE A TEENAGER.

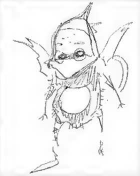


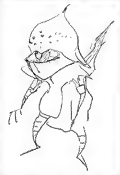


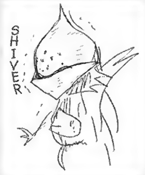






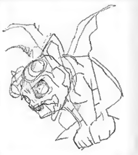


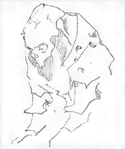


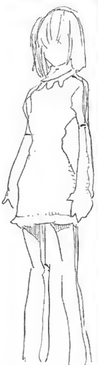


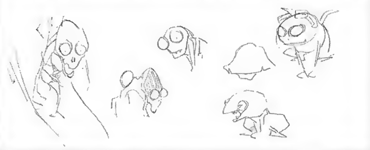
Comments

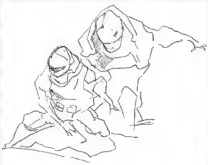
THESE ARE ALL SHADOWS, BUT THEY'RE PROBABLY JUST MINIONS.

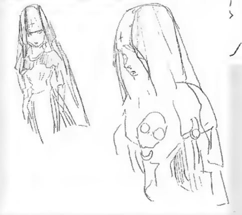












SOMETHING LIKE A POSTSCRIPT

I WOULD LIKE TO TALK A LITTLE ABOUT *RALΩGRAD.*

FIRST, REGARDING THE TITLE, "RALΩGRAD." THE "Ω" IS THE GREEK LETTER "OMEGA." I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT MEANS. BEFORE THE SERIES STARTED, WE WERE TALKING ABOUT PUTTING SOMETHING IN BETWEEN "RAL" AND "GRAD" SO THE TITLE WOULDN'T JUST BE "RALGRAD"—SOMETHING LIKE "&." I TALKED IT OVER WITH OUR EDITOR TO COME UP WITH AN IDEA THAT WAS A BIT COOLER. I COULDN'T COME UP WITH ANYTHING, BUT OBATA SUGGESTED THE "Ω." I HAD HEARD THAT IN OBATA'S PREVIOUS WORK, *DEATH NOTE*, ITS MAIN CHARACTER, LIGHT YAGAMI, WORE AN OMEGA WATCH. I BET THAT'S WHERE HE GOT THE IDEA FROM.

IN OTHER WORDS, IN "RALΩGRAD," THE "Ω" DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING. WE JUST WANTED TO USE A COOL LOOKING SYMBOL TO BREAK UP "RAL" AND "GRAD." SO PLEASE DON'T READ OUT THE TITLE AS "RAL OMEGA GRAD."

AFTER I WROTE THIS LITTLE PIECE, I SHOWED IT TO OUR EDITOR. HE SAID, "OH, THAT SIGN ISN'T 'OMEGA.' IT'S A SYMBOL CALLED 'DRAGONHEAD' FROM GREEK MYTHOLOGY." SO REPLACE ALL INSTANCES OF "OMEGA" THAT I JUST MENTIONED WITH "DRAGONHEAD." SORRY! BUT THIS JUST PROVES THAT THIS SYMBOL REALLY HAS NO SIGNIFICANCE, BECAUSE I THOUGHT IT WAS "OMEGA" UP UNTIL RECENTLY.

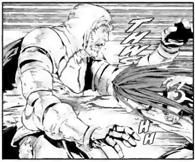
■☊ DRAGONHEAD
THIS SYMBOL IS
USED IN WESTERN
ASTROLOGY.

I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO TALK ABOUT TWO PLACES IN THE STORY THAT WERE REWRITTEN AFTER THEY WERE PUBLISHED IN THE *WEEKLY SHONEN JUMP* MAGAZINE. OF COURSE, THERE WERE MANY CORRECTIONS THAT WERE MADE FOR THE GRAPHIC NOVEL PUBLICATION, BUT THOSE WERE MOSTLY REALLY MINISCULE THINGS. THE TWO CHANGES IN QUESTION THAT REALLY LEFT AN IMPRESSION ON ME ARE FROM THE FIRST CHAPTER AND THE LAST CHAPTER.

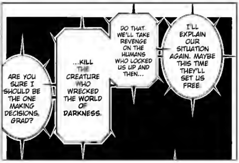
THE PART IN THE FIRST CHAPTER WAS WHEN RAL WAS RELEASED FROM THE DARKNESS AND ATTACKED HIS OWN FATHER. ORIGINALLY DURING THE ROUGH SKETCHES, GRAD'S LINE WAS, "AFTER WE GET OUT OF HERE, WE'LL KILL THE ONE WHO IMPRISONED US AND DESTROYED THE WORLD OF DARKNESS," INSTEAD OF "WE'LL TAKE REVENGE ON THE HUMANS WHO LOCKED US UP AND THEN KILL THE CREATURE WHO WRECKED THE WORLD OF DARKNESS."

EVEN IN THE DRAWINGS, IT SHOWED RAL PIERCING HIS FATHER'S STOMACH.

SINCE THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME WE SEE RAL, I WANTED THE IMAGE TO MAKE A BIG IMPACT, BUT I GUESS IT WAS GOING A BIT FAR TO SHOW PATRICIDE IN A MAGAZINE FOR YOUNG BOYS, SO I MADE IT REALLY AMBIGUOUS.



■ FROM VOL. 1, P. 30.1


I'LL EXPLAIN OUR SITUATION AGAIN. MAYBE THIS TIME THEY'LL SET US FREE.
DO THAT. WE'LL TAKE REVENGE ON THE HUMANS WHO LOCKED US UP AND THEN...
...KILL THE CREATURE WHO WRECKED THE WORLD OF DARKNESS.
ARE YOU SURE I SHOULD BE THE ONE MAKING DECISIONS, GRAD?

■ FROM- VOL. 1, P. 11.1

THE PART IN THE LAST CHAPTER THAT WAS REWRITTEN IS AT THE VERY LAST PART. THE STORY STARTING FROM "ONCE A SHADOW PERFORMS A SPECIAL FUSION WITH A HUMAN, IT CAN'T FUSE WITH ANY OTHER HUMAN IT ENTERS." ON PAGE 143 WAS TOTALLY DIFFERENT. I'LL JUST SHOW YOU THE ORIGINAL SCRIPT BECAUSE THAT'S PROBABLY THE EASIEST TO UNDERSTAND.

GRAD: ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS?

RAL : YEAH. EVEN IF WE'RE IN THE DARKNESS, I CAN MOVE AROUND FREELY AND IT'S NOT SCARY.

BUT MISS MIO, ARE YOU SURE YOU DON'T REGRET COMING?

MIO : NO. THE PHOENIX UNDERSTOOD MY FEELINGS. I'M GLAD THAT SHE BECAME A TOTAL FUSION WITH ME AND BROUGHT ME HERE.

RAL : WELL, EVEN IF YOU'RE HERE, MISS MIO, THE WORLD ITSELF IS PLANAR, SO I CAN'T FONDLE YOUR BOOBIES.

MIO : RAL, I'M THE QUEEN OF DARKNESS NOW. I WON'T TOLERATE SUCH INSOLENCE.

RAL : HA HA.

THEN MY QUEEN, LET'S PLAY A GAME THAT YOUR HIGHNESS HAS TAUGHT ME.

MIO : OH, THAT GAME?

RAL : SHIRITORI*, THE WORD GAME.

I'LL GO FIRST... "RALGRAD." COME ON. YOU HAVE TO USE THE "D" FROM "RALGRAD."

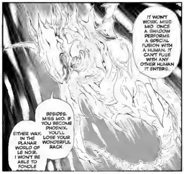
MIO : "D"? "D... DEAR, I GIVE THANKS TO YOU."

RAL : HUH?

RAL : IT'S JUST SOME WORDS OF APPRECIATION, RALGRAD.

---

*_SHIRITORI_ IS A GAME WHERE PLAYERS TAKE TURNS COMING UP WITH WORDS THAT START WITH THE SAME LETTER AS THE LAST LETTER OF THE PREVIOUS PLAYER'S WORD.
FOR EXAMPLE:
RED -> DRUM -> MONEY -> YAM


IT WON'T WORK, MISS MIO. ONCE A SHADOW PERFORMS A SPECIAL FUSION WITH A HUMAN, IT CAN'T FUSE WITH ANY OTHER HUMAN IT ENTERS.
BESIDES, MISS MIO, IF YOU BECOME PHOENIX, YOU'LL LOSE YOUR WONDERFUL RACK.
EITHER WAY, IN THE PLANAR WORLD OF LE NOIR, I WON'T BE ABLE TO FONDLE

■ [FROM VOL. 4, P. 143.1]

AND THAT'S HOW IT ENDED.

"RALΩGRAD" STARTED WITH RAL AND GRAD PLAYING THAT WORD GAME AND ENDED WITH RAL AND MIO PLAYING THE SAME GAME IN THE WORLD OF DARKNESS.

I THOUGHT THAT IT WOULD BE PRETTY AWESOME COMING FULL CIRCLE, BUT THE FACT THAT RAL HAD GONE TO THE WORLD OF DARKNESS WAS NOT MUCH OF A HAPPY ENDING. IF MIO FOLLOWED HIM THERE, IT WOULD SEEM EVEN MORE TRAGIC, SO WE DECIDED THAT ONLY RAL WOULD GO. JUST THE NAME "WORLD OF DARKNESS" MAKES IT SEEM LIKE A PLACE THAT WOULDN'T BE FUN. ALSO, HAVING THEM ABANDON THE WORLD OF HUMANS WOULD PROBABLY HAVE LEFT A BAD AFTERTASTE.

PERSONALLY, I THINK THAT MIO REALLY LOVES RAL, SO IT WOULD HAVE BEEN A HAPPY ENDING IF SHE HAD GONE WITH HIM. I'M SURE THERE ARE PLENTY OF PEOPLE WHO WOULD PREFER THE TWO-DIMENSIONAL WORLD OVER THE TOUGH AND HARSH THREE-DIMENSIONAL WORLD OF REAL LIFE.

THOUGH IT CAN NEVER BE POSSIBLE... BUT THAT'S WHY WE HAVE FANTASIES!

TSUNEO TAKANO
SEPTEMBER 19, 2007

VIZMANGA

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